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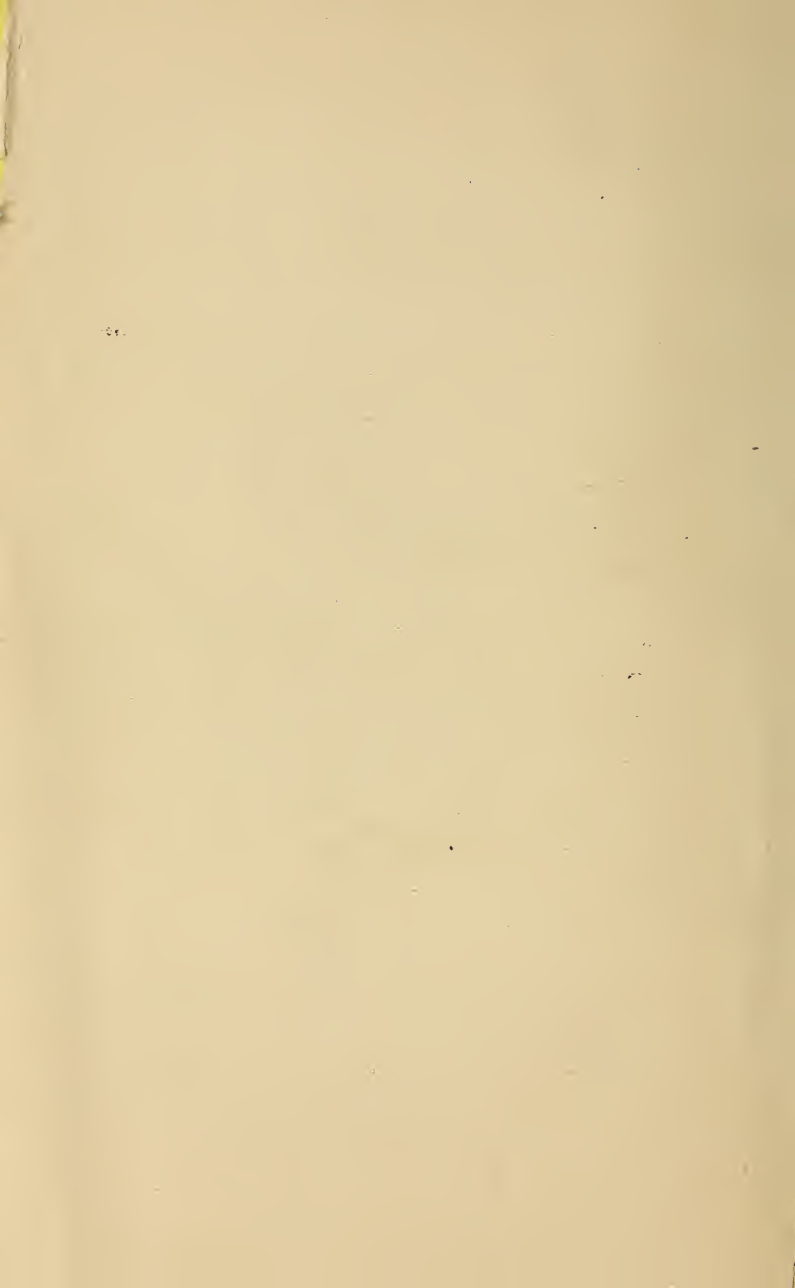
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# BRAHMOISM;

OR,

## HISTORY OF REFORMED HINDUISM

FROM ITS ORIGIN IN 1830,  
UNDER RAJAH MOHUN ROY,  
TO THE PRESENT TIME.

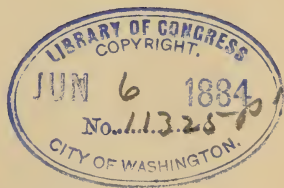
WITH A PARTICULAR ACCOUNT OF

BABU KESHUB CHUNDER SEN'S CONNECTION  
WITH THE MOVEMENT.

*Ramashandra Bose.*  
" "

BY

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## PREFACE.

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THESE papers embody the substance of lectures delivered in various places in India, both in Urdu and in English, and their publication here and circulation here and in India, is likely to dispel the clouds of misapprehension and morbid sentimentalism which stand in the way of genuine Christian progress. Their rambling character, and a good deal of the repetition by which they are disfigured, will find, in the opinion of the indulgent reader, a justification in the fact that they were written at different times and under diverse circumstances. Three of them—the second, the third, and the fifth—have appeared as articles in the *Indian Evangelical Review*, and the sixth as such in one of the periodicals in this country. They are published in the shape of a volume, in the hope that they may receive favorable consideration, in the hands especially of those well-meaning Christian men and women whose reverence for the Brahmo religion—if religion a series of shifting beliefs can be called—is due to imperfect acquaintance with its dogmas and principles; and with a view to show cause why we, Christian missionaries, cannot hold out the right hand of fellowship to its champions without a glaring compromise of principle and very culpable betrayal of the interests of the truth intrusted to us.

RAM CHANDRA BOSE.

MAY 20, 1884.



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# BRAHMOISM.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

BRAHMOISM cannot with any shadow of propriety be called a *new religion*. Regarded, however, as a novel form of faith, its champions need not blush to see it placed in juxtaposition with the two moral creations of the nineteenth century which may with some degree of propriety be called *new religions*. These are, stated in the chronological order in which they have developed, Mormonism and Comtism.

Mormonism was established in the year 1830, the very year which witnessed the birth of the Brahmo Sabha in Calcutta, by Joseph Smith, generally called Joe Smith, a man devoid of education, but obviously possessed of qualities fitted to make him a leader among certain classes of people, evincing a character in which we see an odd mixture of credulity and cunning. By a series of visions, revelations, and angelophanies he was led to discover and translate a strange book, purporting to embody a connected and coherent history of America since the confusion of tongues at Babel, and to confer upon that book the pre-eminence in relation to the varied books of the Bible which had been given to the Koran by Mohammed long before his birth. To

the fanciful narratives thus disinterred by him he added a series of revelations as occasions arose ; and in this way he elaborated a system of theology of the most grotesque character, and a system of morality of a degrading type.

The theology of Mormonism is an odd mixture of pantheism, materialism, and hero-worship of a mythological, idolatrous, not Carlylish type. It begins with "an infinite quantity of self-existing matter," and evolves from "the union" of "two" of its "elementary particles" a God who cannot possibly exist apart from a human body, and who "eats and drinks and loves and hates." The process of evolution it indicates is very slow indeed. The particles after an incalculably long period of self-development become a man of feeble powers, which, however, expand as he grows in knowledge till, instead of a human being of limited capacities, is seen a God of enlarged intelligence and potencies. He goes on improving now, and will go on improving throughout eternity, in knowledge and power, and therefore he is not now and never will be infinite in knowledge and power. It is maintained, as a corollary from this position, that every man living is a God in embryo, and may in process of time attain knowledge and power enough to create and rule a world. There has, moreover, been a succession of Gods—God the Father being God of Adam, Adam being God of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ being God of Joe Smith, and Joe Smith being God of us poor mortals. Is there no eternal and abiding principle to which the homage both of gods and men is due ? Yes : that principle is Truth, which has appeared, does and will appear, in endless varieties of forms.

Mormonism upholds a sort of trinitarianism amid the

hosts of its gods emanating, at various times, from an interminable heap of intelligent and self-moving matter by a slow process of evolution. It brings forward what may be called a double trinity, one ancient and one modern. The modern trinity consists of two embodied Gods, the Father and the Son, and one intellectual principle of union and action, the Holy Spirit, who exhibits divine power and wisdom when on account of corporeal limitations the Father and Son cannot act. But the modern trinity is the *fac-simile* of another, the ancient trinity consisting of Jehovah, Elohim, and Michael, who was Adam. Hence Adam's superiority to Christ !

Mormonism upholds the doctrines of universal salvation, but the glimpses it presents of heavenly felicity are in grossness and sensuality scarcely surpassed by the views of Paradise embodied in Mohammedanism. In heaven they marry and are given in marriage ; and the most favored of the Latter-day Saints expect to have in heaven harems as full at least as those they are compelled to leave behind for a time when they go out of this world. And besides, they settle by nice calculations the number of acres they are to have, each of them, around his palatial residence in heaven, to improve by tillage and adorn by art. One good feature of their community, unremitting toil proceeding from or sustained by admirable habits of industry, is perhaps the only redeeming feature of their grossly sensual descriptions of heavenly bliss.

Such is one of the two great creations of the nineteenth century in the department of religion, briefly and very imperfectly sketched ! Joe Smith and his associates had the effrontery to believe that this heap of oddity, eccentricity, extravagance, and contradiction

would in time supplant the glorious faith of the Christian Church ! It is impossible to say which of the two things—the grotesque religion he initiated or the grotesque hope he entertained—brings out his universally acknowledged mental aberration with the greater prominence.

But now we come to the second of the two great religious innovations, inventions rather, of the century. Auguste Comte was born a few years earlier than the date which witnessed the birth of the founder of Mormonism ; and there is intellectually that difference between the two which subsists between a giant and a pigmy. A man of wonderful versatility and wonderful attainments, he seemed fitted to communicate a new impetus to the spirit of scientific inquiry and philosophic thought. And if he only had the patience of thought and calmness of intellect, without which great discoveries in the region of science and philosophy cannot be made, he would have left behind him something more permanent, though perhaps less brilliant, than the crude, hasty, and ill-digested speculations with which his name is associated. About fifteen years after Joe Smith had laid the foundation of his execrable creed, Comte fell over head and ears in love with the wife of a galley-slave, and discovered that he had a heart which needed something more than cold, philosophic abstraction. A religion appeared to the enamored philosopher a necessity, and a religion he had no difficulty whatever in evolving out of his fertile brain. The first problem was how and where to find a God, for even Comte could not but conclude that a religion without a God would be something like an institution without its vitalizing principle. He solved this vexed question by calling attention to what he was

pleased to call "the Collective Humanity," an abstraction indeed when we take a retrospective view of the history of the world, but appearing in a concrete form in the generations to come, in posterity. This new Supreme Spirit should be called Posthumous Humanity, but as it embraces the nonentities of the past as well as the realities of the present and the embryos pointing to the future, it may be designated by the name of Collective Humanity. But why, it may be asked, call it Collective Humanity, when from the sum-total human beings are excluded whose business is merely "to digest food and manure the earth"? But there is, after all, no impropriety, as useful animals, such as "horses, dogs, oxen, etc.," are brought in to make up the complement of the number required!

But is not a visible symbol of the invisible deity needed to bolster up pious feeling and devotional enthusiasm? Comte therefore had to look for an appropriate symbol, and he had not happily far to go. What could be better fitted to draw the soul naturally apathetic out into a stream of passionate devotion than the beautiful Madonnas in the great cathedrals of his own and neighboring countries? A lovely woman of about thirty with a lovely infant son in her arms—what can be a better symbol of the genius of humanity than such a person? But such a symbol is not always within reach for purposes of private worship, and therefore a man should daily prostrate himself in mute adoration before his mother as representing the past, his wife as representing the present, and his daughter as representing the future. The mother, the wife, and the daughter form the trinity of Comtism, and the three feelings stimulated by their worship are veneration, attachment, and kindness. This caricature of

worship accompanied with caricatures of the sacraments and feasts of the Romish Church, all under the absolute control of a hierarchy of *savants*, presided over by a supreme pontiff of philosophy, is the religion of Auguste Comte. That it was entertained for a moment by such a man as Comte ; that it did not perish with him, but has, on the contrary, found advocates among men of education in civilized countries—this is a proof of the oft-repeated truth that when men presumptuously cast aside the light that is in them they are judicially given over to fatuity and madness.

What a relief to turn from these grotesque and extravagant types of faith to the religion of the Brahmo Somaj, which upholds a creed insufficient indeed, and to some extent erroneous, but by no means associated with eccentricities of such glaring character ! Its superiority is to be traced to a variety of reasons, some of which it is desirable to point out. And, first of all, it is desirable to mention the good sense with which the champions of Brahmoism have recognized some of those truths which may justly be called intuitive. Mormons and Comtists are drawn into the region of oddities and eccentricities, intellectual aberrations and religious tomfooleries, because they declare war against their moral nature, and presumptuously cast aside its primary beliefs. They extinguish the flickering lamp of truth in their hearts, and grope in a darkness of their own creation. Hence the facility with which they literally make fools of themselves or become laughing-stocks to all sensible men ! The Brahmos, with commendable good sense, avoid the rock on which not only their faith, but even that which makes them rational beings is wrecked. They accept the funda-



mental truths of religion on the testimony of their moral consciousness, as they believe in the objectivity of the material world on the testimony of the senses, superadded perhaps to this testimony.

Like the thoughtful Kant, they cannot play either with "the starry heavens" or with their own "sense of responsibility." They instinctively believe in the existence of a God, not an inscrutable force, an impersonal first cause, or a being of limited power though boundless good-will, but a personal Deity of unerring wisdom and limitless power, holy and full of love, just and merciful. They recognize our duty, not merely to express faith in the existence of such a Being and then quietly shelve Him, but to love and serve Him, and allow Him to regulate our life and conversation. They believe in a distinction between right and wrong, essential, eternal, and immutable, not merely one created by society for its convenience and therefore changeable as its emergencies. They believe, in short, in an unchangeable and imperative law of righteousness, emanating from God Himself, and bearing therefore the impress as well of His authority as of His glorious attributes. They believe in a future state of rewards and punishments, wherein the moral anomalies noticed in this life will be rectified, and the balance of justice restored. They believe in our free agency, and in the fact that our happiness and misery here and hereafter hang upon our relation to God and our attitude toward His perfect law. In a word, they believe in all the doctrines and principles of which simple naturalism or the religion of nature consists; and therefore they have truth on their side as far as they go, though certainly not unmixed with error. Hence the immense superiority of their faith over the extravagant creeds

which rear their superstructures on the ruins, so to speak, of the instinctive beliefs of humanity.

Their faith, in the second place, indicates a progress from darkness to light, not *vice versa*. The Mormons and Comtists shut their eyes to the Sun of Righteousness and commence a retrograde move from a good toward a bad faith. No wonder they get entangled in ludicrous error and add madness to folly ! The Brahmos, on the contrary, move from a degenerate toward a better faith. Their system may justly be characterized as a reform. It may be regarded as an attempt to revive the ancient faith of the country, of which its modern manifestation may in one sense be represented as a miserable caricature ; or it may be regarded as an attempt to supplant the national faith by a system of eclecticism transferred wholesale from lands more enlightened than our own, or modified and accommodated to the moral exigencies of the country. But in either of these aspects it is a move in the right direction, inasmuch as it is evident that that national faith is so corrupt in its nature and disastrous in its consequences that almost any departure from it, excepting, of course, such as land us in the absurdities embodied in Mormonism and Comtism, indicates genuine progress.

Again, it should be remembered that Brahmoism has had from the very beginning a larger amount of moral earnestness than either of the two systems, which may in one sense be represented as its rivals. Mormonism was originated by a man whose mind, weak and ill-balanced, was a prey to visions and revelations, and who, like Mohammed, certainly did add a great deal of low cunning to the exuberance of fanaticism characteristic of his impulsive nature. For a time it



showed earnestness enough to make progress in spite of a series of persecutions—cruel, brutal, and most assuredly unworthy of a country which is emphatically the home of political freedom and religious toleration—but the earnestness it displayed had more of the determined spirit of worldliness in it than of godliness and piety. Since the martyrdom of its founder, Mormonism has degenerated into a vice or nuisance ; and whatever earnestness it now shows is hellish and consequently of an execrable type. Comtism has at times been doubtless associated with what is called the enthusiasm of humanity, but as a system of religion it has never appealed to any portion of our nature higher than the æsthetic. Brahmoism has from the beginning been a religion of a purer stamp, and it has manifested commendable earnestness in adopting and assimilating purer types of worship, and introducing moral reforms of, on the whole, a desirable character. It is undoubtedly true that it has had official patronage enough to cripple its vitality, and that if it had been persecuted as Mormonism was during the first few years of its existence, it would perhaps have been nipped in the bud. But some degree of earnestness of a right type it has shown, as a matter of fact, and its obvious superiority over the other two systems is partially to be traced to it.

And, lastly, the superiority of Brahmoism must be ascribed partly to the superiority in a religious point of view of the community directly benefited by it over those influenced by the two rival creeds. Though frivolous on the whole, our educated countrymen are not so ludicrously senseless as the peoples swayed by the naked absurdities of Joe Smith or Auguste Comte. A grotesque creed might very easily be spread among

the uneducated masses of our countrymen. But, thanks to English education, such a creed, if introduced among those who form the upper ten thousand, would have no chance whatever of considerable or permanent success. A god incapable of living except in a body with possibilities of infinite progress before him, or an abstract idea worshipped in the shape of a beautiful woman with a lovely child in her arms, would be laughed off the stage by them. A few among them are Comtists, but they are followers of Comte's English disciples, who, while they adopted his philosophy and his classification of the sciences, laugh at his religion as an indication of his dotage.

The champions of Brahmoism need not, we repeat, blush to see their system alongside of the religions of the age, to which the term "novel" may with a deal of propriety be applied, along, of course, with the expression generally associated with it, "queer." Brahmoism is one of the signs of the times, and in some respects a good one. Its bright side may be pointed out with devout thankfulness.

1. It has been from the very beginning a standing protest against polytheism and idolatry. If there was anything to which its celebrated founder, Rajah Ram Mohun Roy, seemed irreconcilably opposed, it was idolatry. He disliked and even abhorred it from his youth up, and he allowed no opportunity of publicly expressing his hatred to it to slip out of his hands. He wrote against it, he spoke against it, he deplored its ascendancy in the country in public and in private, and he ultimately embodied an implacable hostility to it in an organization which was fitted not to give it quarter. The fact that he once or twice represented it as necessary to the ignorant does not detract from his hostility

to it. Brahmoism has with some degree of fidelity represented his irreconcilable antagonism to the popular idolatry of the country. It has perhaps relaxed its zeal against it a little in the attempts it has at all times made to coquette with it, but on the whole its trumpet has not given an uncertain sound in this matter. As a standing protest against popular forms of idolatry, we may bid it God-speed.

2. It has, since the organization of the progressive Somaj, been a standing protest against the caste system. Rajah Ram Mohun Roy strove to maintain his caste, at least ostensibly, even in England ; and no form of service fitted to indicate his renunciation of its privileges was held when his remains were buried at Bristol. His successor, Babu Debendro Nath Tagore, was equally determined to leave the monster intact ; but Babu Keshub Chunder Sen made it not merely a moot-point, but a test question, and has ever since his separation from the Adi Somaj been firm on this point, however veering on others. And it must be admitted that in this matter he has sacrificed expediency to principle, and conscientiously thrown off advantages which he might have secured by carrying out a temporizing policy. The avowed antagonism of his Somaj to the formidable system of caste is a good sign.

3. Brahmoism, again, has to the best of its ability thrown itself into the work of social and political reform. It has introduced a needed innovation into the marriage laws of the country, has bestirred itself in the cause of female education, has organized associations to check the spread of drunkenness in the land, and has always been most forward to back efforts fitted to help the needy and raise the poor. It has been not merely a theoretical religion, but a practical

system, and its humanitarianism is worthy of praise and encouragement.

4. Again, Brahmoism is doing its best to resist the tide of atheism which is flowing out specially of government schools and colleges. What may be called the religion of negations is unhappily becoming fashionable among the very best educated *alumni* of these institutions. This religion appears under a garb of modest doubt or unbelief, and therefore shorn of its repellent features ; but in reality it does its best to hold up to ridicule the primary, instinctive beliefs on which the superstructure of every positive religion is based. It does not boldly deny in unequivocal terms the existence of God, the propriety of worship, moral distinctions, the future reward of virtue and the future punishment of vice. But the denial is implied in its tone, its utterances, its affected modesty, and its sarcastic smile. This insidious foe is abroad, and no Christian fights it more systematically, more energetically, than the Brahmo.

5. Brahmoism, moreover, has been popularizing ideas which are foreign to the literature of the country— which are characteristically as well as admittedly Christian — viz., the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. In an article entitled “The Relation of the Brahmo Somaj to Hinduism and Christianity,” in the *Theistic Annual* for 1873, there are statements which point out with emphasis the great source from which these lofty ideas have been borrowed. On page 28 of the brochure occur the following sentences : “The idea of the brotherhood and equality of all mankind before God, I am sorry to say, is not to be found, because it is never recognized in any of our ancient writings. The idea is decidedly foreign,

Western, and I think I might say Christian.” And on page 31 of the same paper we have this admission : “ I do not deny there are innumerable passages in Hindu books calling the Divine Being by all manner of names, but such names and the sentiments they embody are very different from the deep personality of spiritual relation typically expressed when Jesus exclaimed, “ Our Father in heaven ! ” These ideas may and do lie buried beneath heaps of error in the religions of the world, but Christianity has not merely exhumed and vitilized them, but given them a practical significance they never possessed before its appearance. And Brahmoism, by popularizing them in a country where they are scarcely, if at all, recognized and never reduced to practice, is doing good.

6. And, lastly, the universal veneration in which the name of our Lord is held in almost all circles of our educated countrymen is to be ascribed, partly at least, to the teaching and influence of the Somaj. Time was, even within the recollection of middle-aged men in India, when the excellency of the character of our Lord was so little perceived that attempts to question its spotless purity were made by a few even of those who stood at the head of the educated community at Calcutta. A pamphlet was written entitled, “ Christianity—What is it ? ” by a man who used to distinguish himself both as an essayist and a speaker in the debating clubs of the metropolis, and in it a virulent attack on the moral character of our Lord was made. But a great change has come over the educated community since its appearance in the matter. One scarcely now comes across among its members a person ignorant and stupid enough to throw out hints and innuendoes to the disparagement of the character of Christ, while



the monster ready to come out with an open attack thereon in print has entirely disappeared from the stage of religious controversy in India. This change has been brought about by the spread of correct information regarding the life of our Lord, facilitated mainly by the missionaries. But it must be admitted that in this matter they have been helped by the Somaj, which may in one sense be considered a fruit of their labor of love.

Having pointed out some of the excellences of Brahmoism, we consider it our duty to refer to a few of its defects before we proceed to a careful examination of its historical development and doctrinal principles. Let us conclude this paper with a brief notice of a few of the mistakes into which our Brahmo friends have fallen.

1. They have fallen into the mistake of renouncing a few of those beliefs which may justly be characterized as intuitive. They have retained a few of the instinctive beliefs of humanity, the ultimate principles of faith, and in this they have acted wisely ; but they have cast overboard a few, and this is one of the most prominent mistakes they have made. They have retained the instinctive beliefs of man *unfallen*, but they have thrown aside the instinctive beliefs, or what may properly be called the instinctive beliefs of man *fallen*.

The religion of humanity may justly be represented as consisting of two formations—the primitive and secondary. The primitive formation is simple *naturalism* or the religion of nature, which finds its complete, or all but complete, embodiment in four of the five well-known symbols of Lord Herbert of Cherbury: (1) There is a God. (2) He ought to be worshipped. (3) Virtue

and piety are the chief elements of worship. (4) There is a future life of rewards and punishments. These principles are the basis of all faith, and may be found, buried it may be, under heaps of error in every system of religion properly so called. The religion they constitute of themselves would have been adequate to the exigencies of human nature if man had not sinned, but the relations in which he stands to the Being whose righteous law he has presumptuously transgressed are disturbed, and his own nature is vitiated. Something therefore must be added to the original religion of humanity to make it suited to his altered circumstances. Lord Herbert of Cherbury is aware of this, and adds to the principles of naturalism another symbol, the necessity of repentance. Repentance, he affirms, is a duty.

But when this father of modern infidelity in England dwells upon the sufficiency of his five symbols, he is at war with the instincts of fallen man, who naturally builds up another formation or stratum of beliefs upon his foundation. These beliefs it is desirable to enumerate.

*a.* Belief in the necessity of a divine intervention or direct miraculous interference to rectify the disorder of the moral world is universal and instinctive. Every sin a man commits is, as Dr. Bushnell justly says, a miracle—an action performed in contravention of the laws of nature—and brings in a miracle of disorder. The result of man's sin is the complete unhingement of the machinery of nature : man sits in the world amid universal wreck as a child who has let fall a beautiful tea-service from a table, and shrieks and sits aghast amid scattered fragments of broken cups and broken saucers. And man is no more able to reorganize the

world than the child is to replace the beautiful cups and saucers he has broken into pieces. And so he instinctively cries for divine intervention as the child cries for help. And he not only believes in the necessity of such intervention, but maintains that God has intervened—come between a ruined humanity and a ruined world to rectify the disorders of both.

*b.* Belief in the necessity of a divine revelation—objective, not merely subjective—is also universal and instinctive. One result of sin is darkness in the soul, the extinction of that knowledge of God and our duty, which but for sin would have been our glorious heritage. Experience brings man to a recognition of two indisputable facts—that he is destitute of proper knowledge of God and his duty, and that he cannot by his own effort struggle out of his spiritual ignorance. And he instinctively cries for a revelation, and maintains, moreover, that one has been granted. There is not merely a universal recognition of the need of a revelation, but a universal belief that God has been pleased to vouchsafe a revelation for the enlightenment and guidance of fallen man.

*c.* The necessity of mediation, moreover, is universally and instinctively recognized by man. Men who have no adequate ideas or approximately adequate ideas of the intense holiness of God or of their own unutterable corruption may laugh at the idea of approaching the Deity through a Mediator ; but humanity instinctively believes that sin has rendered direct communication between the righteous Ruler of the universe and His rebellious subjects impossible. The religions of the world prove this to a demonstration. Nay, so strong is the tendency to have recourse to mediation that some of those who have been most prominent in their oppo-



sition to it have themselves been converted into mediators. Mohammed vehemently opposed the doctrine, and distinctly gave his people to understand that he was not a mediator ; but his ashes had not become cold ere he was raised to the dignity of a mediator by his followers. And if Brahmoism live and become the religion, not of small groups of solitary thinkers but of the masses, Mr. Sen or some other leader will ere long be converted into a mediator in spite of all the loud talk against mediation associated with it !

*d.* What has been said of the necessity of mediation may with equal propriety be said of the necessity of an atonement for sin. The universality of the doctrine of sacrifice proclaims this necessity in tones of thunder. Man's tendency to a recognition of the necessity of an atonement for sin—not a spiritual and intangible, but a palpable, bloody atonement for sin—is so strong that all attempts to overcome it have been foiled. The history of Buddhism is full of instruction in this as in other respects. Buddha declared a war of extermination against one and all the moral instincts of humanity, going the length of even ignoring, if not denying, the existence of God. But he has been conquered by these instincts, has himself been worshipped as a god, recognized as an incarnation, honored as a prophet or the source of a special revelation, and regarded universally by his followers as a being who came down from heaven to rectify the disorders brought in by sin. One of the doctrines he opposed most vehemently is the doctrine of sacrifice. How utterly futile his opposition has been is proved by the fact that sacrifices are universally offered in countries wherein his sway has been acknowledged and his religion has been in the ascendant.

*c.* And lastly, belief in an incarnation is universal and instinctive. The belief of humanity which appears at first sight the strangest is that God has appeared in a visible and tangible form on the stage of human history. This belief is a unique phenomenon, and has to be explained. It cannot be traced to human philosophy, which has always enlarged upon the impossibility of the great God taking any interest in human affairs, and which has laughed at the idea of His taking so much interest therein as to be induced to forsake His heavenly glory and come into the world in a human form. Man is naturally prone to have such an overwhelming sense of God's greatness as to look upon such condescension on His part as impossible. This universal conviction, therefore, cannot be traced to him. Left to himself, he could not possibly have elaborated the idea of an incarnation. His universal belief in it must therefore be traced to some other source. Admit that prophetic announcements regarding an incarnation have existed in some form or other from the beginning of days, and that in the fulness of time God did appear on the stage of history under the limitations of a human form, and the strange phenomenon is rationally explained.

These instinctive beliefs lie embedded in one and all the religions of the world, and they are associated with the deepest longings of the human heart. Brahmoism in casting them overboard has committed the same sort of mistake to which the vagaries and crotchets of Mormonism and Comtism are to be traced. While it deserves praise for the good sense with which it has retained the intuitions embodied in what we have called the primitive formation of the religion of humanity, it has laid itself open to censure by throw-

ing aside those of which its secondary formation is composed.

2. The second mistake of our Brahmo friends is the readiness with which they have held up to public view as correct representations of Christian doctrine, the caricatures thereof presented in the writings of noted infidels. As candid men they should have borrowed their notions of our holy religion from the Bible and standard works on Christian theology ; but instead of pursuing this sensible course they have allowed themselves to be victimized by misstatements and false representations emanating from the enemy's camp. They have allowed dashing, reckless writers of the Theodore Parker stamp to indoctrinate them in this matter, and it is no wonder that they have received poison instead of wholesome food.

Let us illustrate this by an example. The *Theistic Quarterly Review* for May, 1880, contains an article from the pen of Mr. A. D. Tyssen entitled, "The Schools of Religious Thought in England." It has scarcely fallen to our lot to see so many misrepresentations grouped together in a paper of so small a size. Speaking of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the writer says : "The Son is the name for Jesus ; and the Holy Ghost is a name for the divine influence shed by God upon man, *which was personified and deified by the Christians of the third century or thereabouts.*" The italics are ours. If this statement were publicly made in England, the ignorance and temerity of the writer would be at once recognized, and little mischief done, if any at all. But here there is danger of a statement so obviously false being accepted as true. Under the caption "The Nicene Creed," Mr. Tyssen has these sentences : "The early Christians began call-

ing Jesus the Son of God without attributing any very definite meaning to the expression. Then certain theories were invented to justify it, *one of which was the miraculous conception of Jesus.*" Here is *à priori* history with a vengeance. Speaking of the High Church party, the writer says : " There are *two theories* in the New Testament of the communication of a divine grace to the apostles. One of these is that on one occasion (John 20 : 20) Jesus aspired on them and said, ' Receive ye the Holy Spirit.' The *other theory* is that some days after Jesus ascended, as is alleged, into heaven, the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles, and apparently the other followers of Jesus also, one hundred and twenty in number (Acts 1 : 15), in the shape of fiery tongues, and conferred on them the power of speaking foreign languages." Theories indeed ! Facts are without the slightest evidence coolly represented as theories. Speaking of " the influences which are acting upon religious thought in the present day," he says : " These are nothing less than a mass of evidence, growing stronger and stronger every day, tending to show that the whole basis of the Christian religion is false, and its structure unstable at every point."

Mr. Tyssen presents this " mass of evidence." We cannot of course be expected to analyze this voluminous (!) mass in the fag-end of our paper, but we shall present two or three examples. Mr. Tyssen first alludes to the tendency of modern astronomy to overturn our faith, and says : " Now the whole Christian theory of the relation of Jesus to God is based on the assumption that the human inhabitants of this planet are the sole objects of God's care and attention. But surely the other worlds must exist for some good purpose :

are they not peopled with intelligent moral beings ? Do they not require a revelation and a redemption just as much as ourselves ? Is the second person of the Godhead going round to these millions of globes and in each sacrificing himself up to the first person ; or are the inhabitants of this globe the only set to be redeemed, and all others to be annihilated or doomed to eternal torture ?” The writer being obviously an intelligent man, it is impossible to refrain from bringing a charge of disingenuousness and malicious libel against him. How coolly he assumes two things in spite of direct statements to the contrary—the confinement of the benefits of Christ’s death to this world, and the similarity between its moral condition and that of the innumerable worlds scattered over the universe ! The bold writer does not even spare the moral teaching of our Lord as he speaks of “ a conviction that the moral precepts of the Bible are in many cases deficient and in some clearly wrong. Thus, “ take no thought for the morrow ” is wrong ; “ resist not evil ” is wrong ; “ give to him that asketh thee is wrong.” Nothing can be done for persons who *will* not understand. Speaking of “ the supernatural events in the Bible,” the writer says : “ *No one* now can believe the stories of the flood, the sun standing still, and Jonah living in the whale’s belly.” No one, we suppose, barring the millions of intelligent men who call themselves Christians of the orthodox type !

The naked fallacy of these and other statements of the sort with which this short paper is fraught makes them innocuous in Christian lands, where people know something about their religion. But here, where people do not take the trouble of studying Christianity, they are regarded as Gospel truth, and its claims are



consequently laughed at. As a rule our Brahmo friends, as we shall have occasion to show, look at our holy religion through the distorting medium of such libellous statements, and in this they commit a mistake which tends to rob them of the character of fair reasoners to which they lay claim.

3. We shall here point out only one more of the grievous mistakes into which our Brahmo friends have fallen. They have assumed the attitude and tone of teachers a little too soon. The claims they advance are at first sight preposterous, and justify the array of sarcasms of which they so loudly complain. They claim an extraordinary or rather miraculous insight into the religions of the world. They profess to understand Hinduism better than the Hindus, Mohammedanism better than Mohammedans, and Christianity better than Christians. There are learned men in the country who have grown gray in the atmosphere of Hindu literature, who have the holy scriptures of the country and their precious contents at their fingers' end, but they are assured by a number of young men, very good indeed, but by no means distinguished by breadth of scholarship or acuteness of thought, that their labors have been in vain and that they have egregiously failed to understand the very rudiments of their religion ! There are learned Mohammedans who have thoroughly mastered the Koran and the entire mass of literature connected with and bearing upon it ; but they must with cheerful submission sit at the feet of men to whom the language of their sacred book is even a greater mystery than its mystical declarations, and learn the very A B C of their religion. And as to learned archbishops and bishops, clergymen and missionaries, their ignorance of the teaching of Christ, in

spite of the fact that they have made it the subject of their life-long study, is deplorable indeed. If any body of men need to repair to the Brahmo church for instruction with the greatest eagerness, they are the men ; and yet such is human obduracy that they of all men are the most prone to keep aloof from what is so beautifully adapted to raise them from the depths of degrading "Chriſtolatry" to the glorious height of pure theism ! Such attitude on the part of the deservedly eſteemed champions of Brahmoism is ridiculous, and that because there is in reality nothing to juſtify it. If they had really diſcovered ſome new truths, dug out ſome buried jewels of thought from the accumulated ſacred literature of the world, and expoſed them before the admiring gaze of its vaſt populations, their pompous aſſumption of the dignity and functions of heaven-appointed teachers of mankind might have had a ſhadow of ſenſe about it. But as they ſimply appear in borrowed feathers, the attitude they aſſume as ſuch is ludicrously out of place. If they had taken up the moſt mod-eſt poſition of learners, and thoughtfully and prayerfully trodden the path of inquiry, they might have, inſtead of being entangled in mazes of vagaries, had the ſunſhine of genuine truth in their ſouls !

Brahmoism, it muſt be confeſſed, has exerted but a very limited influence over the educated natives of India, and the moſt advanced among them are prone to look upon it as a ſuperſtition, perhaps a trifle better than Chriſtianity. And yet Brahmoism preſents in almoſt every Indian city a very reſreſhing ſight—a number of young men, too ſmall to be taken notice of by the outside world, united by a creed loftier by far than thoſe prevalent in the country, and a ſervice far more rational than the mummeries and tomfooleries as-

sociated with current forms of worship. It is indeed very satisfactory to see small communities of Brahmos meeting together to worship God, not after the irrational modes utilized in the country, but in the sensible style brought in by Christians—to sing appropriate hymns of praise, to offer up impassioned prayers for pardon and for purification, and to deliver discourses more or less able on religious and moral topics. But there are serious drawbacks to the satisfaction with which we contemplate these scenes of devotional enthusiasm.

These communities lack in their constitution the fibre of genuine thorough-paced earnestness, and therefore they allow themselves in religious matters simply to drift. There are some sincere men among their members, but few even among these have such enthusiasm of loyalty as will enable them to stand a series of persecutions or to maintain their faith through thick and thin. The Brahmo publications are brimful of complaints about their indifference and apathy, and the fact that, though professedly attached to their new-fangled system, they are by no means willing to make the slightest sacrifice for it is universally acknowledged. Their attitude, therefore, invites general banter and sarcasm in a country where any form of religion which fails to lead to extraordinary sacrifices is considered a sham.

But the presence of this element of weakness in Brahmoism—the acknowledged indifference and apathy on the part of the great majority of its professors—is not here brought forward as fitted to invalidate its claims. It is referred to simply as a bad sign, and therefore a discouraging feature, though by no means confined to Brahmoism. But the most discouraging



thing about the Brahmos as a body is an easy-going faith, giving rise to delusive peace. They are as a body most lamentably averse to calm inquiry and laborious investigation, more apt to be swayed by rhapsodies than influenced by arguments. Without being moved by a proper insight into their religious wants, without being influenced by any of those religious convictions and apprehensions from which the agonizing cry, What shall I do to be saved ? springs forth, and without that adequate amount of intellectual labor which accompanies successful investigation in all departments of knowledge, they have got hold of a few sporadic truths and built them up into a crude system. And they stand upon it as upon firm rock, determined to shake their heads at all arguments fitted to open their eyes to the vulnerable points of their own position, and the invulnerable character of that which they attack with such reckless impetuosity. The missionaries who have measured their strength with them in the arena of fair controversy have been forced to acknowledge that as a class they are impervious to reasoning. Declamation is their forte, and whenever brought to the corner by a line of fair argumentation they adroitly elude its point by descanting on the supposed uselessness of arguments in the sphere of personal religion. They forget that personal religion is an impossibility apart from a body of truth susceptible of moral demonstration, and resting its claims on evidence of some kind or other. And they are far from being alive to the fact that mere declamation, however well fitted to stir up undiscerning susceptibilities, cannot lead them to the truth, and that if they wish to find out the pearl of great price they must dig deep, analyze and weigh evidence with calmness, and tread the path of investiga-

tion with assiduity and perseverance. That they may give up the frivolity of an easy-going credence and make religion the subject of an earnest inquiry and laborious research is our heartfelt prayer !

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ADI SOMAJ.

THE Adi Somaj is the parent of all the associations which cluster around the banner of Brahmoism. An account of its origin, progress, constitution, and present *status* must therefore precede that of its offshoots, the *Bramo Somaj of India* or *New Dispensation* and the *Sadharan Somaj*.

Let us in the first place point out the sources from which our information regarding the origin and development of the Adi Somaj is derived. These are varied and of undoubted authority. Among them the first place is to be given to Miss Carpenter's loving Memoirs of Rajah Ram Mohun Roy. Miss Sophia Dobson Collet's short "Historical Sketch of the Brahmo Somaj," published in 1873, embodies a plain, unvarnished account, prized by all parties, by the Brahmos themselves as well as by those who take serious exceptions to the conclusions she seems anxious to establish. Mr. Dall's Lecture on "The Brahmo Somaj in India," delivered at Naini Tal in June, 1874, adds some personal items of an interesting character to the valuable information contained in Miss Collet's pamphlet. A few important items of fresh information may be culled from an article entitled "A Brief Survey of the Brahmo Mission" in *The Theistic Annual* for 1874, and from a tract entitled "The Brahmo Somaj Vindicated," published in 1868. Our information re-

garding the doctrinal platform occupied by the Adi Somaj is mainly derived from Dr. Mullens's well-known book entitled "Vedantism, Brahmoism, and Christianity," a repertory of information and a masterly refutation of the arguments arrayed in favor of its position.

The Adi Somaj was founded by Rajah Ram Mohun Roy in January, 1830, the year which was signalized in America by the birth of Mormonism. The great man was born at Radhanagar in the district of Burdwan, of Brahmin parents. He early developed a tendency to religious inquiry and life, coupled with intellectual powers of a superior order. When a boy he was a follower of Vishnu like his parents, and he showed his loyalty to his creed by devoutly reading a chapter of Bhagavat every morning. But when he was sixteen years old he was so thoroughly convinced of the futility and senselessness of the popular idolatry that he determined to oppose it publicly by writing a manuscript against it. This led to a breach between him and his father so wide that he was obliged to leave the home of his early years. He travelled in different parts of the country, all the time making religion, both theoretical and practical, the main subject of his study. He also spent three years in Thibet studying the forms of faith prevalent there. Here also his opposition to idolatry manifested itself and brought him into grief.

When he was about twenty his father was reconciled to him, and he returned to the home of his childhood with improved health and settled principles. His convictions, however, did not give him rest, and he entered into earnest controversies with the champions of the popular faith, and thereby made himself an object of universal dislike, insomuch that his father was obliged

once more to separate himself ostensibly from him. This renewed breach, however, was apparent, not real, as the wayward son continued to receive substantial help from the apparently incensed father. His dislike to idolatry became uncontrollably vehement after his father's death, and led him to overt acts of hostility such as rendered a reconciliation between him and the interested parties opposed to him an impossibility. He took advantage of the press, newly introduced into the country, and published a series of works subversive of the position maintained by his opponents.

Rajah Ram Mohun Roy was a diligent student of theology. He mastered not only English and Bengali, but Sanscrit, Arabic, Persian, Greek, and Hebrew, with a view to study the sacred scriptures of the Hindoos, Mohammedans, and Christians in the original. But it should be observed that during at least the time he devoted to such sacred study, he sought religious truth to satisfy a craving of the intellect rather than a longing of the heart. And certainly no religion does at first sight commend itself to the intellect of man as more reasonable than the monotheism which he made his creed. It is when the longings of the human heart are carefully looked into that the insufficiency of mere theism becomes manifest, together with the necessity of a remedial system adapted to its diseased condition.

The conclusion to which his theological investigations brought him was on the whole well grounded. A pure system of monotheism may partly be represented as the basis on which the superstructures raised by the varied religions of the world are founded. Could not this system be extricated and made the basis of a religious union among mankind? Rajah Ram Mohun Roy concluded that this achievement could be realized,

and the great desire of his life was to found a church within the precincts of which the followers of the diverse and conflicting religions of the world might join in public adoration of the great God in whom they all believed. He was in many respects an earnest man, and his theory of the feasibility of effecting a union of all religions under the form of a monotheism distilled from them appeared in a visible and tangible shape.

In January, 1830, the year which witnessed the abolition of female immolation or *Suttee* rite, for which he had labored hard, he, along with a few select friends, laid the foundation of the Association, which eventually developed into the Brahmo Somaj. He called the Association "Brahmo Sabha," or the Society of Brahma, the Supreme Deity, bought a house in Chitpore Road, Calcutta, for its meetings, and furnished it with a small endowment to meet all necessary charges. The whole establishment was placed in the hands of trustees appointed by him, and provision was made in the trust-deed for the permanent exclusion of all idolatrous worship, and the maintenance of such as was fitted to lead to "the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe," and "the strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds."

About nine or ten months after the foundation of this Association, the Rajah proceeded to England as an agent mainly of the Emperor of Delhi. In England, where his fame as a distinguished scholar and reformer had preceded him, he was received with very great honor by almost all classes of respectable people, especially by ladies and gentlemen of rationalistic tendencies. A great many hopes were centred in him by distinguished persons in India, but his death, occur-



ring in the third year of his stay in England, led to their being dashed to the ground. A very interesting account of the busy life he led in England, the honors heaped upon him in every place he visited, the cordial reception he was especially favored with in rationalistic circles at Bristol, and the affectionate care with which he was nursed when ill, is given in Miss Carpenter's little book entitled "The Last Days of Rajah Ram Mohun Roy." This book is by no means deficient in faithful and accurate delineation, inasmuch as, though written by an ardent admirer with the object of setting forth his greatness, it is a correct index of those great mistakes, perhaps not regarded as such by the amiable writer herself, which it is our duty to point out.

The first and perhaps the greatest mistake of his life was the very attractive Quixotic idea by which he allowed himself to be victimized with an ease incompatible with the astuteness he always displayed as a man of business. This was the idea of reconciling the jarring religions of the world under the shade of a simple rationalistic creed. This had been attempted by many illustrious foreigners before his day, by a few of the reformers of his own country, and by a Mohammedan sovereign at whose eccentricity he must have heartily laughed ; and the complete failure of all attempts previously made should have been a deterrent warning to him. It is to us a matter of surprise that a man of his calm and penetrating intellect should have conceived it possible to conciliate the Hindus by means of a system which represented idolatry as a great crime, to conciliate Christians by a religion which declared a war of extermination against the doctrine of the Trinity. Had he not allowed his clear intellect to be clouded and warped by a romantic but essentially false

theory, he would have been the first person to recognize the incongruity of the position he occupied with the hope he cherished—he would have clearly seen that so long as he opposed, either directly or indirectly, doctrines held as life by the followers of the different religions of the world, it was idle to talk of their reconciliation and union under his auspices. A little thought, in a word, might have brought him to the conclusion that the hostility with which the varied religions of the world regarded each other and with which they were sure to look at his new-fangled faith, was implacable, and therefore fitted to laugh at all his attempts to effect its removal. The sequel was—he strove to please everybody and succeeded in pleasing no one.

His second mistake was his pursuance of a supple temporizing, rather than an inflexible, uncompromising policy. He professedly believed in Unitarianism, and published an octavo volume of about six hundred and fifty pages, representing the Precepts of Jesus “as the sole guide to peace and happiness.” He called Jesus “the founder of truth and of true religion,” “a being in which dwelt all truth,” “the spiritual Lord and king of Jews and Gentiles.” He called himself “a follower of Christ,” “a believer in Him as the Son of God in a sense peculiar to Him alone.” And in spite of all these public acknowledgments of fealty to Christ, he set up what might justly be called a Hindu framework, and unscrupulously thrust the Master, whose follower he never hesitated among Unitarians and Christians to represent himself to be, into the background. He constituted the Upanishads, not the New Testament, the canonical scriptures of his association, and scrupulously observed the caste system in the



forms of worship he established. The sacred scriptures were read by Brahmins in a closed room, apart from the rude gaze of the worshippers of various castes assembled in the consecrated hall, the portions of the service these might consider their own being the sermons delivered and the hymns sung. Nay, from considerations purely personal, the redoubtable Rajah simulated reverence for the caste system in public, while in private he never scrupled to trench contemptuously upon its rules ; and by death-bed directions went so far as to debar himself from the privilege of religious burial, that his fidelity to its injunctions might be known to his countrymen, and that nothing prejudicial to the interests of his legitimate heirs might occur ! All this might be venial in the case of a shrewd man of business ; but his conduct, when viewed in connection with his claims as a reformer, cannot but be pronounced both inconsistent and reprehensible.

It is admitted that he was induced to adopt this course by prudential considerations. He believed in the principle of killing the devil by easy blows, and he maintained the propriety of avoiding overt acts of hostility, such as might create a breach between him and his countrymen, and thereby make it impossible for him to influence them for good. He considered it desirable to come down to their level that he might gradually raise them to his. But intelligent and observant as he was, he might have known that a temporizing policy of the sort he determined upon pursuing had never succeeded, and could not but prove a failure. And it, in this case, did prove a failure, though fortunately he did not live to see and be mortified by it. The caste system, to which he ostensibly paid homage in the forms of devotion he instituted, ultimately led to the first great dis-

ruption by which the very life of his association was endangered, and to the shock from which it has never recovered. The following bit of conversation, reported by Mr. Dall in his pamphlet alluded to, shows that even the bare mention of the name he revered, and wished to see revered, was tabooed within the precincts of his church by his successor. "On first visiting Debendro Nath Tagore, in 1855, I asked him whether he ever allowed the name of Jesus to be heard in his church. 'No, never,' he replied. 'And why not?' I said. 'Because some people call him God.'"

Another of his great mistakes was that he sought Theism where it could not be found, or rather that he supported his monotheistic creed by documents which were in spirit and in letter opposed thereto. He professed to have discovered a system of pure Theism in the Upanishads, and he made these venerable documents the main if not the sole stay of the creed, under the banner of which he expected to see the diverse and clashing religions of the world reconciled. But the conclusion upheld by the Upanishads was the very antipodes of what he expressed an anxiety to bolster up by these remains of the sacred literature of the country. Nobody can read the Upanishads, even cursorily, without being driven to the conclusion that pantheism, not theism, is the creed upheld by the spirit and letter of their teaching. The cosmogonies embodied therein (each evolving the wonders of creation either through an omnific spirit or through the so-called elements, or through food, out of the essence of Brahma, or out of some unmanifested substance behind the manifested Deity), the insight presented into the origin and nature of man as well as of the world, the way of salvation pointed out, knowledge of man's per-

fect identity with Brahma, and the view given of his ultimate absorption into the Divine Essence—all these are irrefragable proofs of the dominant, pantheistic tendency of these hoary records. And those who pretend to find nothing but theism in them are among the parties who, in analyzing the contents of all documents, allow themselves to be dragged as slaves by their foregone conclusions.

What was the result of this serious mistake ? For years the religion of Rajah Ram Mohun Roy's association was, not the monotheism he was anxious to see established, but the ancient pantheism of the country. His successors, some of whom were learned Pandits, did not play fast and loose with the Upanishads, as those do who pretend to discover pure theism in them ; and they fearlessly set up the creed these documents were fitted to uphold. Nay, they went further. They added the Brahmo Sutras of Uyas and the comments of Shanker Acharya to their sacred literature, and moved heaven and earth to resuscitate the religion of which these two persons were the most redoubtable champions in ancient India. They propounded the doctrine of an all-pervasive spiritual essence, the doctrine of emanation or self-development, and the doctrine of absorption ; and they illustrated and fortified these doctrines by means of analogies and arguments borrowed from the existing records of the ancient pantheism of our country. And it was not till the untenable nature of the creed of the Upanishads had been rendered manifest by a literary expedition to Benares that pantheism was abolished and the monotheism of the founder was restored.

It is in our humble opinion difficult to settle whether Rajah Ram Mohun Roy was a monotheist or a pan-

theist. His published utterances in England are in favor of the assumption that he was a theist of the Unitarian school, but the great work of his life was the revival of pantheism, and the beautiful songs he composed were decidedly pantheistic. However settled his convictions and principles were when he died among his Unitarian friends at Bristol, his mind seems to have wavered for a long time between pantheism and monotheism. And this made him vacillate, and went far to justify the opinion entertained by his countrymen of him, that he was in essentials all things to all men, a Hindu among the Hindus, a Mussulman among Mussulmans, and a Christian among Christians.

But perhaps the explanation of his vacillation is simple enough. He was not thoroughly an earnest man, and his religion was more a theory of the head than a moving principle of the heart. This will be represented as a very harsh judgment, especially when it is remembered that he encountered a series of petty persecutions by denouncing idolatry at a time when the spread of English education had not rendered it fashionable or even safe to do so. That he was moved by a noble and disinterested passion in the beginning of his career none will venture to deny. But may it not be safely assumed that the exuberance of patronage and praise lavished upon him by not a few distinguished members of the ruling class tended to demoralize him to some extent? At all events, it is a matter of fact that the noble impulse which guided him in the days of his youth gave place, long before he laid the foundation of his Association, to cool, calculating, worldly wisdom, such as is unfavorable to the growth of genuine piety in the soul. It should also be borne in mind that Rajah Ram Mohun Roy's religion

was not based on a deep conviction of sin and an equally deep insight into the longings of the human heart. It was at best a superficial affair, and the forms it assumed in different places and under diverse circumstances were in perfect keeping with its want of coherence, depth, and earnestness. In one respect, however, the Rajah was almost thoroughly consistent throughout his lifetime, and that is his antagonism to popular idolatry, which he never hesitated to represent as a "detestable" sin, though at times he was prone to vindicate it as fitted to lead men of grovelling minds to rise to the adoration of the supreme spirit through the worship of tangible images.

Rajah Ram Mohun's departure from the country some months after the inauguration of his system was almost a fatal blow to it. The Association lingered for almost nine years without being able to make its influence felt beyond a very narrow and narrowing circle. In the year 1833 it received an impetus from a nobleman to whom, as the second great leader of the Brahmo movement, great prominence ought to be given in an account of its origin, rise, and development.

Babu Debendro Nath Tagore was born in 1818 in one of the most refined though excommunicated homes in Calcutta. A son of the celebrated millionaire, Babu Dwarka Nath Tagore, he was brought up in the lap of profuse wealth and luxury ; and in the days of his youth he did not escape the demoralizing influence of such education. *The Theistic Annual* of 1872 presents an extract, under the heading of "Anecdotes and Chapters from Real Life," from a sermon of his, giving an account of the striking way in which he was roused from voluptuous indolence and made alive to a sense of his duty to God and man. From "the sixteenth to



the twentieth year" of his life he went on "intoxicated with the pleasures of the flesh," regardless of his "spiritual interests and dead to conscience and to God." Let his own words relate the manner in which he was awakened. "Once, on the occasion of a domestic calamity, as I lay drooping and wailing in a retired spot, the God of glory suddenly revealed Himself in my heart and so entirely charmed me and sweetened my heart and soul, that for a time I continued ravished—quite immersed in a flood of light. The world outside and the world within both seemed bathed in a sweet and serene stream of celestial effulgence. What was it but the light of truth, the water of baptism, the message of salvation? Was it a vision that so charmed me? No, the living presence of the living God, who could doubt?" But this season of ecstasy was followed by a long period of struggle, and it was not till he reached the twenty-fifth year of his life that he felt his "inferior propensities curbed," "the wild fury of passion abated," "conscience reinstated in its exalted place," "the world shorn of its attractions," and "God" made "his only comfort and delight."

Babu Debendra Nath Tagore founded the *Tattva-bodhini Sabha*, or Society for the Knowledge of Truth, in 1839, almost three years before his spiritual struggles had given place to a holy calm—on the ruins, so to speak, of Rajah Ram Mohun Roy's association, yet with a view to perpetuate his work. The grand aim of this society was to "make known the religion of Brahma," and thereby effect the regeneration of the country. With a view to the accomplishment of this object, it determined, in the first place, to exhume the religion of Brahma from the sacred literature of the Hindus, long since dead and buried, to ascertain what

their original *shastras* were and what their precepts with reference to worship, sacrifices, offerings, feasts and fasts, and to trace the modern system of polytheism from its origin through the Darsans, Purans, Tantras, and other sacred books, down to the present time. In the second place, it purposed to prepare and circulate treatises on Astronomy, Natural History, Physiology, and Metaphysics, with a view to set forth the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, noticeable in His works. And, lastly, it was resolved that a complete system of morals should be elaborated to draw men, prone to go astray, toward the blessings of practical religion.

The task before the association was gigantic, but, nothing daunted, the members addressed themselves to it. Most opportunely they had a press and a fount of type presented to them, and they eagerly utilized the present by reprinting five of the Upanishads and some of Rajah Ram Mohun Roy's works. They started a monthly periodical, called the *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, and appointed one of the very best Bengali writers of the day as its editor. The periodical embraced a wide range of subjects, though its great business was to create an interest in the sacred literature of the country. They established a school, which, however, they had to give up for want of funds. They appointed a learned Pandit as their minister, and under his guidance they held weekly meetings, at first at Babu Debendra Nath Tagore's house, but ultimately in their long hall in Chitpore Road. Monthly meetings were also held, and in them sacred texts from the Upanishads were read and expounded, and prayers were offered up. The order of the weekly service was the recitation of and meditation on the *Gayatri*, the

well-known and oft-repeated Brahmin prayer, the chanting of a hymn from one of the Upanishads, an exposition of select texts from the Vedas, or an essay on some branch of natural theology, a short sermon by the president or some leading member, and a number of Bengali hymns sung by a choir occupying the recess opposite the dais reserved for the minister and his assistant.

The society lacked organization and coherence, and to supply this want a "covenant," like the following, was drawn out:

*"The Brahminist Covenant."*

"Om. This day, the —— day of the month of —— in the year —— I adopt the religion of the worshippers of Brahma.

"1. I will live devoted to the worship of that one supreme Brahma who is the creator, preserver, and destroyer (of the universe), the cause of deliverance ; all-wise ; all-pervading ; full of joy ; the good ; and without form. I will worship him with love, and by doing things that will give him pleasure.

"2. I will worship no created thing, as the supreme Brahma, the Creator of all.

"3. Except on days of sickness or calamity I will every day, when my mind shall be at rest, in faith and love, fix my thoughts in contemplation on the Supreme.

"4. I will live earnest in the practice of good deeds.

"5. I will endeavor to live free from evil deeds.

"6. If, overcome by temptation, I perchance do anything evil, I will surely desire to be free from it and be careful for the future.



“7. Every year, and in all my worldly prosperity, I will offer gifts to the Brahmo Somaj.

“8. Oh God ! grant unto me that I may entirely observe this excellent religion.”

This is, we believe, the revised covenant utilized when pantheism was formally abandoned by Babu Debendra Nath Tagore and his party, but it gives us insight into the nature and provisions of the original document.

Mr. Tagore and twenty of his friends signed the original covenant, and were solemnly initiated into the new faith by their honored minister, Pandit Ram Chunder Vidyabagish, in December, 1843. Thus organized, the society made great progress for about a lustrium. A grand local habitation was secured, their present long and beautifully furnished hall in Calcutta, and branch associations were established in the vicinity of that city and a few in distant places. The membership increased from 83 in 1843 to 573 in 1847, and the income of the society rose during the period from 3476-9-0 rupees to 6727-0 rupees. But from 1847, the most prosperous year, all things considered, the society has had, there was a falling off, both in its membership and its income, until, in the Report for 1851, we find the former represented by 488 and the latter by 3155-0-10 rupees.

Dr. Mullens, from whose very valuable book and table of statistics presented therein many of these facts have been borrowed, explains this rapid progress and equally rapid declension in a proper manner. English education was, especially during this time, shaking the established faith of the country to its centre. Multitudes of young men were abroad, too enlightened to believe for a moment in the current superstition of the

country, but by no means earnest enough to ascertain the truth by calm inquiry and laborious investigation. They could not remain stationary, nor had they the moral courage and the spirit of self-renunciation to go as far as the truth might lead, and they sought a mid-way asylum which the Vedantism revived by the society offered them, besides flattering their national vanity. And they took shelter in large numbers ; but when they found out that they had nothing more than cold moral discourses to feed upon, their enthusiasm cooled down, and many of them retreated, preferring the uncertainties of universal doubt to the coldness of a lifeless creed.

The period of decadence was a transitional period with reference to the creed of the Tatwabodhini Sabha. It witnessed the gradual loosening of the bonds, and ultimate downfall of Vedantism, and its supercession by what is called "Natural Theism." Every book embodying a historical survey of this association, Dr. Mullens's excepted, gives an account of the way in which the change or rather revolution of belief was effected ; but the most detailed account we have seen of it is that presented in the tract entitled "The Brahmo Somaj Vindicated," published in 1868. The particulars given below are borrowed almost entirely from this able though declamatory pamphlet.

One day Babu Debendra Nath Tagore got hold, by the purest accident, of a stray leaf of the well-known Sanscrit pamphlet, the "Isa Upanishad," and naturally became anxious to look into its contents. But as he was ignorant of Sanscrit, he had the leaf read and explained to him by a learned Pandit. He was so decidedly charmed and edified by the truths contained in it that he determined to study Sanscrit, and thereby

render himself competent to study the sacred literature of which it was a very small fragment. He also deputed four Pandits to Benares that they might study the four Vedas there, copy them out, and return to Calcutta with the precious treasure. These Pandits left Calcutta in 1845, and after a couple of years of study and investigation spent in the holy city, returned with the copies eagerly looked for by their employer. Babu Debendra Nath Tagore studied them with enthusiasm ; but the result was a great disappointment rather than a deepening of the favorable impressions made upon his mind by the stray leaf. He found such puerility, error, and contradiction in these venerable records that his faith in their infallibility was thoroughly shaken. A season of hesitation followed ; but ultimately truth triumphed, and the association gave up in 1850 its Vedantism, together with its belief in the canonical authority of the Vedas. Pantheism was formally abandoned, a form of theism was adopted, the original covenant was changed, and a book was published presenting the doctrines of the new faith in clear forcible language, but without much regard to lucidness of arrangement and precision of expression. This book, called the "Brahmo Dharmo," is even now the creed of the Adi Somaj. Dr. Mullens presents an able abstract of its contents in his small but very excellent work, and translates several of its statements. Of his labors we shall avail ourselves in our exposition of its doctrines and principles.

This new religion is based upon four cardinal principles, which are :

1. "Before the production of this world there existed only the supreme Brahma. Nothing else existed whatsoever. He created all this.

2. "He is wisdom, eternity, joy, and goodness personified ; the everlasting ruler of all, all wise, without a second, most wonderful in power.

3. "From his worship alone is happiness produced here and hereafter.

4. "That worship consists in loving him and performing actions which give him pleasure."

These principles, barring perhaps a little clumsiness of expression, are correct ; but they are too vague and general to be of any use to the soul awakened to a sense of its sinfulness and guilt, and therefore anxious to be saved.

From generals let us descend to particulars. But before we present an insight into these we have one remark to make. The "Brahmo Dharma," though avowedly occupying a standpoint opposed to Pantheism or Vedantism, as it was called, is by no means completely emancipated from its trammels. It is burdened with pantheistic phraseology and pantheistic reasoning, and its position on many of the intricate questions mooted is a sort of *via media* between Pantheism and Theism ; while the passages it quotes from the Upanishads add to the air of uncertainty and confusion spread over its doctrinal and preceptive statements.

1. With reference to the standard of Brahmo theology, the "Brahmo Dharma" does by no means repudiate the infallibility of the ancient Vedas without equivocation. On the contrary, there are passages which seem to indicate a disposition to uphold the position originally occupied. In the third chapter we have this statement : "In order to obtain a special knowledge of the Supreme Brahma, the disciple must go to a teacher. The wise teacher, if he perceive the pupil before him to be of a thoroughly peaceful and tran-

quill mind, will instruct him in that science by which the imperishable and self-existing perfect One may be known. The Rig-Veda, the Yajur, the Sam, the Atharvan Veda, the rules of accentuation, the rites of religion, grammar and the glossary, prosody, and astronomy—these constitute the inferior science. That is the most excellent science by which a knowledge of the imperishable Supreme Brahma is obtained.” This is an exact fac-simile of the method of attaining emancipating knowledge indicated in the Upanishads, and presupposes the infallibility of the sacred books of the country. But perhaps the belief of the Adi Somaj is—that of all religious books of the world these are the most fitted, though destitute of the character of infallibility, to give us that knowledge of God which results in the salvation of the soul here and its final emancipation from the effects of sin hereafter.

2. What the “Brahmo Dharma” says of God is not free from the tinge of uncertainty by which nearly all its statements are characterized. Its great watchword *Ekamebaditiyam*—“One without a second,” was the battle cry of ancient pantheism, and must be interpreted according to new rules before it can be made to embody the fundamental idea or truth of Natural Theism. And it reproduces the passages of the Upanishads in which God is represented as “the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the breath of the breath, the eye of the eye,” and thereby apparently sanctions pantheistic notions. But on the whole it inclines to Theism, and represents God as “the Great Spirit,” “without birth,” who has no producer, no master, “and who is the eternal one.” He is said to be “without organs of perception, without organs of action,” to have “His eye



present everywhere, His face everywhere, His arm everywhere, His feet everywhere ;” and “ He knows all things that can be known,” “ presides over all as their king ;” and “ He pervades whatever things are included in this egg of Brahma.” He is “ spotless,” “ without sin,” and “ pure in nature,” “ the fountain of holiness,” “ the punisher of sin,” the “ Lord of wealth.” “ At all times He decrees to all His subjects the rewards and punishments which they deserve.” “ He is the refuge of all and the friend of all.” And yet he is said to be *Asneha*, “ without love,” though *Mangal Swarup*, “ the type of benevolence and goodness.”

3. What the book says regarding the relation of the world to God is, like what it says of the divine nature, not free from a tinge of Pantheism. For instance, here is a reproduction of the theory of evolution, propounded in the Upanishads : “ He reflected about the creation of the universe, etc. . . . From this Supreme sprang breath, reason, and senses, also ether, air, light, water, and this earth, which supports all things in the world.” Again the idea of pantheistic pervasiveness runs through this sentence : “ He who sees that all things abide in the Supreme Spirit, and perceives the existence of the Supreme Spirit in all things, feels not dislike toward any.” The book, however, repudiates Pantheism, and puts a theistic construction on these and other reproduced utterances of the authors of the Upanishads. Nor are passages wanting setting forth an essential distinction between the Creator and His creation. “ He is different from all things, known or unknown.” “ He has sprung from no cause, neither has He become anything else.” “ He is the witness of all, and possesses none of the qualities of created

things.” He is represented as not only essentially different from His works, but as the Creator and Preserver of the Universe, its Ruler and Judge. “From the joyous Supreme all these living things sprang, and by Him they remain alive.” “By His control the sun and moon are firmly upheld,” as well as “the earth and the sky, minutes, hours, day and night, the phases of the moon, the months, seasons, years.” “Through fear of Him the wind goes forward, the sun rises, the fire flames, the clouds pour forth water, and death moves on.” “He is the Bridge on which all worlds rest, and by which their dissolution is prevented.” Various orders of intelligent creatures above man are admitted, and the Supreme Spirit is emphatically declared to be “the great God of gods, the *Debta* of *Debtas*, the Lord of lords.”

4. A code of morality, fair and lofty, is embodied in the “Brahmo Dharma.” Man’s duties to himself and to his family and to society at large are pointed out with clearness and circumstantiality. Man is exhorted to subdue his senses and his passions and appetites, avoid self-indulgence in food and drink, practice self-restraint in all matters, and partake of pleasure and pain with moderation and calmness. He is exhorted to appreciate the sanctity of marriage, to be a good husband, a good father, a good neighbor, a good citizen—to “esteem his elder brother as a father, his wife and sons as his own body, his servants as his shadow, and his daughters as objects of kindness.” He is moreover exhorted to be strictly virtuous—to “avoid bad company,” to regard “another’s wealth as clods of earth, and all living creatures as himself,” to “bear all the abuse of others” and “insult no one,” and to be examples of “patience, forgiveness,

subjugation of mind, honesty, purity of mind and body, control of the passions, knowledge of the Shastras, knowledge of Brahma, speaking the truth, and freedom from anger," or of "the ten signs of virtue." But the motives to virtue pointed out are, some of them at least, among the weakest ever brought forward to sustain a virtuous life. There are six : *a*. "All actions which are unblamed (by others) you may perform ; actions which are blamed you must not perform." *b*. "Whatever virtue we practise, you may do ; but don't practise anything besides." *c*. "Apply yourself to that which you consider to advance your own good." *d*. "Follow out with the greatest zeal whatever course will give satisfaction to yourself, and leave everything opposed to it." *e*. "The man who performs works of virtue obtains holy praise." *f*. "Such a man obtains respect in this world and prosperity in the next." Thus public opinion, the example of human teachers, self-interest, self-gratification, respect in the world are placed in the same category with "holy praise," supposing that to be the praise which comes from God, and with prosperity in the next !

5. The views of sin presented in the "Brahmo Dharma" are superficial, and by no means thoroughly correct as far as they go. The vexed question with reference to the origin of sin, and its transmission by the laws of generation from father to son and downward, is quietly and judiciously shelved ; nor is the slightest attempt made to show how sin came into this world. No attempt, moreover, is made to define sin, or to dwell upon its malignant nature. Particular sins, or rather sinful dispositions, such as anger, ingratitude, injustice, worldliness, are enumerated, and some are classified.



“Endeavors to get others’ wealth, evil thoughts of others, unbelief in God and a future world, are three sins of the understanding. Unkind speeches, lies, scandal about others, and improper conversation are four sins of the tongue. Theft, improper envy, and whoredom are three sins of the body.” There is a tendency manifest to trace all these varieties of sins and sinful dispositions to ignorance rather than to inherent depravity, and exhortations having for their object our freedom from its control are by no means few and far between. “Deliver yourselves from the darkness of ignorance. Ye souls ! arise ; wake up from the sleep of ignorance and learn wisdom from a fitting teacher.” The fact that sin is punished in this world and shall be punished in that which is to come is recognized, while its reflex demoralizing influence upon the sinner is pointed out. “The Supreme decrees to all its subjects rewards and punishments which they deserve.” “The man who practises sin obtains disgrace and reaps miserable fruits.” “The man who, uninfluenced by vice, thinks sin, speaks sin, and practises sin, loses thereby all his good qualities.” The “Brahmo Dharma” does not appear thoroughly emancipated from the notion of diverse heavens, placed one above another in an ascending scale, and diverse hills placed one below another in a descending scale, brought out into bold relief in the Upanishads. “Foolish men obtain those worlds which are without joy, and are covered with dense darkness.” Nothing like an adequate idea of the intense malignity of sin and the awful character of the punishment in store for it is to be met in any Brahma production, or in any book apart from the Bible.

6. From the views of sin presented in the book, the

transition to what it says about salvation is of course natural and easy. Nothing displays the vacillating character of its creed so well as the theory of salvation it holds up. That theory is in some respects an exact copy of the one embodied in the Upanishads. Salvation is based on *knowledge*, the knowledge of Brahma, as all our calamities are traced to ignorance ; and sacrifices and ceremonies are represented as matters of subordinate importance. "The man who knows not the imperishable Supreme, though he sacrifice in the world, many thousand years, will not obtain lasting benefits." They who know the Supreme Brahma become immortal ; all others suffer misery. "They surely know that ancient and most excellent Supreme Brahma, who recognize him as the breath of the breath, the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear, and the mind of the mind." This sentence is thoroughly pantheistic, and reminds us of similar utterances in the Upanishads ; but the drift of all these passages is plain—to know Brahma is eternal life. But how is this blessed knowledge to be attained ? Here again the stereotyped method of the Upanishads is pointed out. The devotee or the candidate for Brahma knowledge must look for an accredited or wise teacher, and spend some time under proper tuition. He must then retire from the world and betake himself to hermit solitude ; and under the shade of a giant tree in a sequestered forest he must meditate, his head erect, his passions subdued, his body unaffected by the extremes of cold and heat, and his mind concentrated on the Supreme. One element is added in the Brahmo Dharma to the method of obtaining deliverance from the trammels of ignorance and its miseries pointed out in the venerable records so often alluded to—viz., worship. "Not by many fair

words, nor by a good memory, nor by hearing oft may he (the Supreme Brahma) be known. The worshipper who prays to him obtains him. The Supreme Spirit reveals himself to such a worshipper." This is evidently a modern notion grafted on the old trunk. It is strange that the Brahmo Dharma ignores in its scheme of salvation the very existence of sin, which it in other places points out ; and it does not dwell on the necessity of repentance.

7. We shall conclude our review or exposé of the doctrines inculcated in the "Brahmo Dharma" with a word about the future life into which it presents an insight. Like the varied systems of philosophy which have prevailed in the country, it retains the doctrine of transmigration. "The man who is ignorant and impure gains not the rank of Brahma, but returns into the world. The wise man having gained that dignity is born no more." The varied hells and heavens enumerated in the ancient scriptures of the country are posited here also ; but the degrees of punishment and reward, or misery and happiness realized within their precincts, are all terminable. The idea of eternal punishment is emphatically repudiated, as well as the eternity of happiness attainable in the varied heavens through which the souls of the good pass before their final emancipation from the thralldom of repeated births and deaths. But the doctrine of absorption, one of the most characteristic doctrines of ancient Vedantism, is not retained ; and eternal abode *with*, not *in*, God is the idea brought out, though by no means very clearly. Some years ago a question was raised fitted to indicate a new phase in the time-hallowed doctrine of absorption. The question is this : Does the soul when merged in the Deity after a series

of lives and deaths retain its individual consciousness within His all-embracing consciousness ? The parties by whom this question was raised seemed inclined, in opposition to the ancient philosophy of the country, according to which conscious existence in any form is an evil to be deprecated, to answer it in the affirmative. It is possible—nay, even probable, that if the ancient doctrine of absorption were altered so as to insure the retention of the individual consciousness of the soul when absorbed in the Deity, it would occupy a prominent place among the shibboleths of modern Brahmoism of the Adi Somaj school.

Let us conclude this chapter with a brief reference to one or two of the important conclusions to which the foregoing synopsis of the contents of the book under review, the “Brahmo Dharma,” is fitted to bring us.

This system, it is evident, is like the one now making progress under the banner of the Ayra Somaj, a compromise between ideas antiquated and obsolete, and such as have a dash of freshness about them. It may be called Pantheistic Theism or Theistic Pantheism, and under either of these queer names it is a heterogeneous mixture of theories that cannot be brought together without an explosion. It made a little progress so long as education was at a very low ebb in the country ; but in proportion as knowledge advanced its grotesque character was perceived, and all confidence in it shaken. The progressive members of the Brahmo Somaj outgrew its many-sided, self-contradictory creed, and seceded ; while those who were determined to shut their eyes to its absurdities made rapid progress in the wrong direction, until one of its most enlightened champions was not ashamed to affirm that “Hinduism is the best of all prevailing religions.”

For years it has been dwindling into insignificance, beyond the pale of the sympathy of the educated community ; but as it has an endowed church, its services are regularly kept up in its fine long hall. There is, however, nothing stirring about them, though the singing is excellent and the officiating minister is as scholarly as well as a good man. The Arya Somaj of Pandit Daya Nand will share a similar fate. Its upholders are as a class behind the least enlightened of the *alumni* of the colleges and the schools of Bengal ; but education is making progress where its temporary ascendancy among particular persons is being established. Very soon will the people outgrow its heterogeneous mongrel creed, and as nobody has yet come forward to endow it, as Babu Debendra Nath Tagore has done in the case of the Adi Somaj, its complete collapse it does not need the prescience of a prophet to foretell.

Our second remark is that the unbounded gratulation with which we are apt to look upon parties whom we regard as not far from the kingdom of God is often misplaced. We cannot but rejoice when we see persons of superior intellect and independent thought brought step by step, by advancing light, toward the truth as it is in Jesus. But we ought to rejoice with trembling, as a little procrastination on their part, a little hesitation to make the necessary sacrifice, a little compromise of principle, a little attempt to stifle conviction or play with conscience may lead to our buoyant and exulting hopes to be dashed to the ground. There was boundless joy in mission churches when Rajah Ram Mohun Roy paid a few fashionable compliments to our Lord, and hopes of his speedy conversion were entertained and made public in varieties of ways. But the

Rajah died outside the pale of the Christian Church as a weak, vacillating professor of Unitarianism ; and the association he laid the foundation of has almost, throughout the entire period of its existence, been anti-Christian. It is always a dangerous thing to hold the truth in unrighteousness ; and it is our duty, when we see persons loitering before the gate of the Church and led by conceit or want of the spirit of religious earnestness to refuse to enter in, to toll the tocsin of alarm, and not come out with congratulations and encomiums which vanity and ambition may convert into stepping-stones to absolute spiritual ruin.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE PROGRESSIVE SOMAJ.

THE Adi Somaj or Conservative Brahmoism, thus reorganized in 1852, showed very little vitality till the year 1858, when a young man of an enthusiastic temperament and a fertile mind joined it, and infused a new life into its veins. This young man was Babu Keshub Chunder Sen, then in the twenty-first year of his age, destined to be the third, and in some respects the ablest, and in all respects the most enthusiastic, leader of Brahmoism. The history of the movement for many years has been the history of this remarkable man, and therefore a short biographical sketch presenting the salient features of his early life must precede our account of the reforms with which his name must ever be associated. For the information to be given under this head we are indebted to himself, his own accounts of his early life presented in two specially of those of his addresses in England which appear collected in Miss Collet's book entitled "Keshub Chunder Sen's English Visit," his Town Hall lecture, "Am I a Prophet?" delivered in 1879, and a paper entitled "Retrospects of Life" in the *Theistic Quarterly Review* for January, 1880. There are discrepancies in these accounts of a very serious character ; but these we shall pass over or try to reconcile in our sketch.

Keshub Chunder Sen, grandson of the well-known



Babu Ram Comel Sen, was born in 1838. A tender scion of a Vaishnava family, he was carefully brought up amid the ideas, pure and impure, characteristic of the sect to which his parents belonged. Like boys and girls in general, he believed in the religion of his forefathers without any inquiry whatever, and strove to be faithful to its injunctions, specially of a ritualistic type. But fortunately for himself, he was early sent to the Presidency college for his education, and the knowledge he acquired within its walls destroyed his hereditary faith in the national religion ; but it gave nothing to fill "the void" thus created. The result was that "for two or three years" he regarded the concerns of his soul with perfect indifference and apathy, though he was evidently determined to allow nothing to tempt him out of the path of moral rectitude. But the period of apathy gave place to a period of anxiety. A sense of sin and guilt was awakened within him and a longing to be saved was generated. All tendency to despondency was checked by a heavenly voice which seemed to say, "No, sinner, thou hast hope." This first lesson, learned under the direct teaching of the Spirit of God, led him to cultivate the habit of prayer. Nor was he required to struggle long in prayer, for God revealed Himself to him in a mysterious way and led him to peace and joy. He affirms again and again that in his struggles after the joys of salvation he was helped neither by man nor by book, but by God Himself, who ultimately brought him out of darkness into His marvellous light.

But he does acknowledge his indebtedness to the Bible and other good books which helped him on in the path of righteousness, if they did not usher him into it. In his lecture on "Am I a Prophet?" he

refers to a vision which brought him into what might be called a personal contact with John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth, and Paul, and the influence which emanated from their example led to his renunciation of self and consecration of his powers of heart and mind to the service of his Maker. But the influences brought to bear on him, throughout his career as a reformer, if not during this most critical period of his life, are confessedly varied ; and as their heterogeneous character explains his own heterogeneous character, and the heterogeneous character of his creed, they must be set forth in his own words : “ To me the Bible is a blessed home to which I often love to retire after my refreshing devotions, and I read and meditate over the Old Testament and the New. From such perusal I derive much help, much sympathy, and much comfort, much profound response to what I cherish as the most sacred treasure of my being. The Bible is the word of life indeed. It seems as if the Bible was written for me specially. In the Shastras of my own country, in the Upanishads, in the Gita, and in the Bhagavat, I feel as if I am breathing my own natural atmosphere. It is to me another home replete with dear and hallowed associations of national antiquity, full of the fragrance of a piety as original as it is true and congenial to me. It is as impossible for me to cease to be Hindu in spirit and aspiration, as it is impossible for me to change my skin. The Upanishads and the Bhagavat furnish the staple food of my being. I may as soon cease to contemplate on them as lose my spiritual existence. Buddhism is to me also divine. The discipline and ordinances of Sakya Siddhartha have a strange authority and attraction for my nature. In meditateness, in self-conge-

niality, in peacefulness, in mental illumination and internal peace, Gautama is my ideal, and from Buddhism I sincerely declare I derive spiritual help which no other religion can afford me. With some of the sentiments of Hafez, Shekh Sadi, and Moulana Roum I have come in contact ; and what is there to equal their beauty, their depth, their tenderness, their intoxicated spirituality ? Therefore I say my glorious religion has opened out to me the scriptures and the spiritual treasures of all nations." (*Theistic Quarterly Review* for 1880, p. 17.)

We are bound to state that in his retrospect of the varied moral forces by which his religious ideas have been generated and matured, Mr. Sen has not been thoroughly frank. He has omitted all mention of the infidel authors of Europe by whose writings he has been inspired even more powerfully than by the fragments of the sacred literature of the world he enumerates. His public utterances may be classed under two heads, earlier and later, those with which he identified himself during the first few years of his career as a reformer, and those by which it has been characterized during the last few years. In his earlier utterances we clearly see the impress or the formative influence of such writers as Theodore Parker and Francis William Newman. From this influence even his later utterances are not entirely free ; but these appear colored to some extent by the idealistic speculations of modern Germany, the mysticism of such writers as Swedenborg, as well as the philosophic vagaries of ancient India. It is an indisputable fact that Mr. Sen is a borrower rather than an original thinker ; and no one can read the almost innumerable pamphlets, to which his own name or the imprimatur of his Association is

affixed, without concluding that he borrowed more from foreign than from indigenous sources.

Mr. Sen's best friends admit that his utterances, though eloquent and even imposing, have been characterized by a good deal of inconsistency, incoherence, and wildness. But there are, we think, certain lines of thought or characteristic ideas by which they may as a body be, to a great extent, harmonized. To these ideas, the salient features of the Brahmo creed, special attention should be called. But before we do so, we must briefly allude to the circumstances which led to his secession from the Adi or Conservative Somaj.

Babu Keshub Chunder Sen, after what he calls his "conversion," longed for what may be called the "communion of saints," as well as for opportunities of spreading truth among his educated countrymen. To gratify this double longing of his soul, he established a small club called the "Good-will Fraternity," the members of which used to meet regularly to have religious conversation with him, as well as to listen to his extempore discourses on topics fitted to stir up the best aspirations of their souls. But while thus engaged he thought of joining a church ; but till a Brahmo tract fell accidentally into his hands he did not know that a church exactly suited to his longings existed in his own country and city. This pamphlet brought him to a decision, and in 1858, when only twenty years old, Mr. Sen joined the Somaj founded by Rajah Ram Mohun Roy and reorganized by Babu Debendra Nath Tagore.

His accession to the moribund Somaj was in reality the accession of life. A new life was infused into its services, its missionary spirit, and its philanthropic activity. Every department of the work in the association was revolutionized, especially that having for its

object the propagation of its creed. The Somaj had, properly speaking, no missionaries ; and the few who did a trifling amount of proselyting work had secular appointments, and could therefore devote to it their hours of leisure and overwork only. Mr. Sen maintained the correct principle, that men of ability and attainment should be set apart for missionary work ; and with a view to set a good example he threw up his own employment in the Bank of Bengal. He also established a little association in his own house, called the *Sangat Sabha*, and exerted such a powerful influence over the members that several of them followed his example, and devoted themselves exclusively to the work of propagating the new faith. In 1861 he himself visited Krishnagar, and subsequently he created a sensation among educated natives in Madras and Bombay. In 1863 various towns in East Bengal were visited by one of the missionaries thus separated, and in 1866 the new doctrine was preached in the Punjab by another. But Mr. Sen wished to see reform introduced in another direction. All the members of the Somaj were by no means men of an earnest type or thoroughgoing reformers. Most of them were somewhat like the English reformers in the time of Elizabeth, who had quietly said mass during the reign of "Bloody Mary," and who, if the reigning sovereign had been supplanted by the unfortunate Queen of Scots, would have quietly said mass again. They attended the Brahmo services and Brahmo meetings, but they observed strictly the rules of their respective castes, and were in no way separated by any discernible line of demarcation from their idolatrous countrymen. His influence had a share in leading Babu Debendra Nath Tagore to cast away his sacred thread, to remove



the family idol from its sanctuary in his house, and to celebrate his daughter's marriage according to a ritual of theistic rather than idolatrous significance.

The activity of this enthusiastic champion of Brahmoism was apparently boundless. He issued a series of tracts in English to influence his educated countrymen in favor of the new faith, delivered a series of Sunday lectures with the same object in view, and laid the foundation of a Brahmo college which for want of funds he had to give up not long after his secession from the association he was now doing so much to vitalize.

In 1862 Mr. Sen's services were formally acknowledged, and he was made an "Achargi" or Minister of the Somaj. On this occasion he took a step which led to his temporary banishment from his paternal abode. He allowed his wife to dine with the inmates of Babu Debendra Nath Tagore's house, and so deliberately infringed the rules of his caste. But he and his wife were not baptized, and consequently their separation from their home was temporary, not final. For about four years after his ordination the two leaders of the Brahmo Somaj, Messrs. Tagore and Sen, worked in harmony, though they differed from each other in temperament and in religious views. Mr. Tagore, though a noble example of fidelity and self-sacrifice, was inclined to be conservative, and so unwilling to work in changes of a violent character. Mr. Sen, on the contrary, was of an ardent and impulsive temperament, and could not put up with what he considered serious irregularities. Particularly he was opposed to allowing persons who had not shaken off their caste privileges and badges to conduct divine service or to officiate as ministers of the new creed. But though Mr. Tagore had himself thrown aside his sacred thread, and opposed the caste



system both theoretically and practically, he was not prepared to go all lengths, even in this matter, with his youthful and impulsive companion. The consequence was a series of disagreements resulting in a disruption. In 1865 Mr. Sen presented to his older and more conservative colleague an ultimatum, stating that if the following propositions were not acceded to, both he and some of his friends would be compelled to secede. The propositions are stated below as presented in Dr. Jardine's paper on the Brahmo Somaj in the voluminous Report of the Allahabad Missionary Conference.

1. That the external signs of caste distinctions—such as the Brahmanical thread—should be no longer used.

2. That none but Brahmos of sufficient ability and good moral character, who lived consistently with this profession, should be allowed to conduct the services of the Somaj.

3. That nothing should be said in the Somaj expressive of hatred or contempt for other religions.

The ultimatum was rejected, and Babu Keshub Chunder Sen seceded along with a few friends, and laid the foundation of the Progressive Somaj or the Brahmo Somaj of India. His secession was the departure of life from the Somaj. It broke the heart of Mr. Tagore, according to statements put forward by the progressive party, and ultimately led to his retirement to the Hills. The Somaj is somewhat like an endowed but dead church—it has a name to live, but it is dead !

This schism will have to be referred to when another of a more portentous nature and larger proportions is treated of. It is not therefore necessary to enlarge upon it here ; suffice it to say that among its causes we see a tendency to a democratic form of government

occupying a prominent place, along with a desire to push religious and social reforms with ardent but no means indiscreet zeal.

Since the organization of his church, Mr. Sen has had one great object in view, and he may fairly be described as a man of one idea. This is the fascinating idea which took possession of the calmer intellect of Rajah Ram Mohun Roy—the idea of a religious unification. There are some truths which form the essence of each and every one of the jarring religions of the world. Within the narrow circle of these essential truths, the varied systems of human faith, so prone to wage an interminable war with one another, may meet on terms of perfect amity and good-will. While we hear nothing but the din and clamor of war beyond, there may be eternal peace within. Here there is the essence of all religions, the religion of religions, the creed of creeds. Under the banner of this cream of religious truths, all the religions of the world may unite or coalesce into one faith. Let this creed be adopted and proclaimed, and the world will witness a church within which the conflicting religions of the world will be unified. This religious unification is the great object which Mr. Sen, in pursuance of the religious policy laid down by Rajah Ram Mohun Roy, works night and day to realize.

But Mr. Sen is aware of the almost illimitable vastness of the enterprise, and therefore for the time being he wishes to limit his exertions to a fractional portion of the work which appears to him so necessary and at the same time so feasible. The unification of the almost innumerable religions of the world may not be an accomplished fact till some preliminary minor unifications are realized. The unification of nations must

pave the way to the unification of races, and that to the unification of humanity in general. In the same manner the unification of the varied religions of different countries must precede the unification of all the forms of faith prevalent on the surface of the globe. Let the preliminary work be done in India, and when that is accomplished a base of operations for its further extension will be afforded. Mr. Sen is therefore at present anxious to raise a national church in which the three great religions of the country—Hinduism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity—may be welded into one homogeneous system. Mr. Sen's object is broader than what Nanak tried to see realized. While that great reformer contemplated the amalgamation of Hinduism and Mohammedanism, Mr. Sen labors to see these indigenous systems of religion united to each other, and merged into a common creed along with an exotic and a dominant faith.

To realize this great object a simple creed is needed, and Mr. Sen's creed, stated in different terms in different places and under different circumstances, is simple enough. About a year before he left for England he delivered a lecture in the Town Hall, Calcutta, entitled "The Future Church of India," subsequently published, as all his Town Hall lectures have, from time to time, been, in pamphlet form. In it, after having shown how the popular idolatry of the country and its philosophic pantheism may be merged into a national theism, he proceeds "to evolve the harmony of doctrines." And this he does by simply reiterating the two precepts into which the Lord Jesus Christ compresses "the whole of the law and the prophets." "Never," he adds, "has the scheme of true religion been so simply and exhaustively expounded. Verily in these two

precepts is to be found the substance of all the laws and dispensations of God designed to guide us." In what he says in the paragraph from which these sentences are transcribed he evidently confounds doctrines with precepts, theoretical with practical religion. But perhaps his object is to point to his creed as embodied in what our Lord represents as the sum and substance of the law, or as one to be enucleated therefrom. He recognizes, of course, the existence of sin, and speaks of a "gospel," "the gospel of the Prodigal Son," intending evidently to affirm that when the sinner repents and returns to God his sins are forgiven, his heart is changed, and he is enabled to love God and love man.

In his numerous addresses in England, where he was received with even greater honor than had been accorded to Rajah Ram Mohun Roy, he adopts Theodore Parker's phraseology, and calls his faith the "absolute religion." But his absolute religion differs in some respects from that of the American Unitarian, and consists only of two doctrines—the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Man. All ideas of practical religion—repentance, faith, radical change of heart, growth in grace, maturity of spiritual manhood here and hereafter—are to be evolved out of these essential principles. In these discourses he gives the greatest prominence to the idea of the unity of the Godhead, and deduces from that unity his characteristic idea of the unity of the Church. He seems, however, to overlook the fact that these two ideas, the watchwords of his system, are preached in the Bible, in a sense somewhat different from what he attaches to them.

Again, in his Town Hall Lecture of 1876, entitled "Our Faith and Experience," he presents

his creed in another form, and that borrowed from Theodore Parker, who, as is well known, was in the habit of preaching as great discoveries the three admissions of Kant—God, Immortality, and Duty. After identifying the Spirit-God of ancient India with the Holy Spirit of the Bible, Mr. Sen says : “ Simple and short is the creed of the Theistic Church in India. Its entire faith may be evolved out of this natural consciousness of the living Spirit-God. Let us now proceed to analyze the theist’s creed. There are only three essential doctrines in theism—the doctrine of God, the doctrine of immortality, and the doctrine of conscience. These three constitute the theist’s creed. And yet they are not three doctrines, but one doctrine. They are the constituent elements of one idea, and must be accepted or rejected together. Whoever believes in the infinite and living Spirit-God must perforce accept, as a necessary part of that doctrine, the immortality and accountability of the soul.”

Babu Keshub Chunder Sen’s views of God and of the relation in which he stands to nature and man have a dash of pantheism about them, and a clear insight into them must be secured ere his varied utterances and actions can be properly understood, explained, and harmonized. These are presented in his celebrated lectures on “ Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia,” and on “ Great Men”—the lectures which raised him as if by a magical power from obscurity to fame. These two lectures, though apparently on two different and unconnected topics, form one continuous discourse, the latter being a supplement to or an explanation of the former. Mr. Sen has always been in the habit of speaking of Christ in terms to which a Christian would gladly resort in his attempts to express his loyalty and



devotion to the Saviour. But the terms as employed by Mr. Sen have a meaning very different indeed from what they bear when uttered by a Christian. His lecture on "Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia," taken by itself, would lead, and actually did lead, to his being recognized as one not far from the kingdom of God ; but as interpreted by the subsequently delivered discourse on "Great Men," it would only represent him as a disciple of those rationalists of modern pantheistic schools, who look upon all men as incarnations, and Christ the crowning incarnation. In his lecture on "Great Men" he represents God as immanent in nature in these significant words : "Behold the Supreme Creator and Ruler of the Universe—infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness—*immanent in matter*." "If the world is real, it is real because of the divine power which animates it, and constitutes its *immanent vitality*." But God dwells in man more thoroughly and in a larger measure than in nature or material objects. "Certainly," says Mr. Sen in his famous lecture, "every man is an incarnation." "True incarnation is not, as popular theology defines it, the absolute perfection of the divine nature embodied in human form." "It means the Spirit of God manifest in human flesh." He asks, "Are we not conscious, that, however sinful we may be, God dwells in each of us, *inherent* in our constitution ?" But great men "are greater miracles than ordinary men." They are "superhuman, and, I may add, supernatural." "God puts into their constitution something superhuman and divine. The prophet is both God and man. He is God-man. He is an incarnation of God." All this is *Carlylish* in some respects, but the meaning is plain. All men are miracles and incarnations, born to be driven as herds of



cattle by great men, who are greater miracles and incarnations, and among whom Mr. Sen, in his opinion, occupies a by no means contemptible place. Christ is the greatest among his chosen few men of genius, guides of humanity ; and He is therefore the greatest miracle and incarnation. There is, however, no essential or generic difference between Him and the humblest man living !

This is Mr. Sen's Christology developed in the earliest as well as the latest of his writings. But he speaks of Christ as his Master, his Saviour, his Lord, and his Life. Is he not then on a par with orthodox Christians in his conceptions of Christ ? But the Christ whom he thus adores is not the historical Christ of the Gospels. The historical Christ, though the greatest of the great men he idolizes in a style characteristically Carlylish, is not worthy of the homage he pays to his idol Christ ; and Him, therefore, he disposes of in hurried sentences like the following : " The Lord is my light and my life ; He is my creed and my salvation ; I need nothing else. I honor Christ as my Father's beloved son, and I honor all other prophets and martyrs, but I love my God above all " (" English Visit," p. 40). " He never demanded worship or adoration—that is due to God, the Creator of the Universe " (" English Visit," p. 240). " I believe that every disciple, every follower of Christ, must be a Unitarian " (" English Visit," p. 310). The broad facts of His life, His miracles, are all idealized, and the culminating wonder of His life, His resurrection, is represented in his lecture on " God-Vision," delivered in 1880, that is, in one of his latest utterances, as spiritual rather than corporeal. " When I say Christ is there, do I mean the bodily Christ ? No. Science tells me that the

body is altogether decomposed in a few days after death. Surely the body cannot rise up ; yet my Christ is there. Ah ! it is the Spirit Christ who is there reclining on the bosom of the Lord ” (p. 14). Again, the resurrection of Christ is said in this very lecture on “ God-Vision ” to be characteristically similar to that of Moses and other prophets. “ Every prophet who came down from heaven, as an emanation of spirit-force from the Almighty, must go back to Him, as Christ did, after fulfilling his mission. Where is Moses ? Dead and gone ! The evangelists record a strange and wonderful scene in the life of Christ. I mean his transfiguration. Marvellous vision indeed ! Moses and Elias on either side of Jesus, as he stood on a high mountain, and they were talking with him ! ‘ His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow.’ The soul is lost in amazement as it looks upon this picture. It is said that eye-witnesses saw the event. What does all this mean ? Are we to believe that Moses, after so many centuries, returned to this world ? . . . No flesh, no bones do I see, but three spirits, side by side, three noble souls holding communion with each other ” (p. 15).

A broad line of demarcation is drawn between the historical Christ of the Gospels and the ideal Christ whom Mr. Sen adores as his Master and Saviour. “ I thus draw a line of demarcation between the visible and outward Christ and the invisible and inward Christ ; between the Christ of images and pictures, and the Christ that grows in the heart ; between dead Christ and living Christ. Jesus is not a proposition to be believed, nor one outward figure to be seen and adored, but simply a spirit to be loved, a spirit of obedience to God that must be incorporated into our spiritual being ”

("English Visit," p. 244). "And what is Christ? By Christ I understand one who said, 'Thy will be done,' and when I talk of Christ, I simply mean the spirit of loyalty to God, the one spirit of absolute determinedness and preparedness to say at all times and in all circumstances, 'Thy will be done, not mine'" ("English Visit," p. 248). One more quotation from the same book will suffice: "There is something in the Bible which has staggered many who stand outside the pale of orthodox Christianity, and made them inimical to Christ: I mean His sublime egotism and self-assertion. It is true, Christ says, 'Love God and love man, and ye shall inherit eternal life;' but does He not also say, 'I am the way, I am the light of the world;' does He not say, 'Come unto *me* all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest'? He who said that the only way to eternal life is the love of God and the love of man, also says, 'I am the way.' *Jesus Christ, then, truly analyzed, means love of God and love of man*" (p. 240).

But it may be said that his later utterances are in greater sympathy with the conceptions of Christ enshrined in Christian belief. To these then let us go. In 1878, or about four years ago, he delivered a lecture in the Town Hall, Calcutta, under the imposing title, "India asks, Who is Christ?"—meaning by India, as he always does on such occasions, half a dozen Brahmos. The hero who figures in this discourse is his ideal Christ, not the Christ of the Gospels. The doctrine or fact of the pre-existence of Christ is thus explained: 'Did not Christ say that He existed long before Abraham lived? Did He not say distinctly, 'Before Abraham was, I am.' How then, and in what shape, did He exist in heaven? *As an idea, as a plan of life, as*

*a predetermined dispensation yet to be realized, as purity of character, not concrete but abstract, as light not yet manifested.*" The doctrine of incarnation is couched in these words: "There is an uncreated Christ as also the created Christ, *the idea of Christ and the incarnate Son* drawing all his vitality and inspiration from the Father." Christ's declarations relative to His essential unity with His Father are of course pantheistically explained, while His "religion" is said to be "pure, natural, and perfect idealism." He was not a materialist, but a true idealist. "He saw His own Spirit, and He saw the Divine Spirit also, and in deep communion He found the two identified. He felt He was but a drop lost altogether in the vast ocean of the Divinity." He seems brimful of devotion to Christ. "My Christ, my sweet Christ, the necklace of my soul, the brightest jewel of my heart. For twenty years have I cherished Him in my inmost soul, in my miserable heart." Can a Christian say more? But the point of the declaration is blunted the moment we "analyze" his "sweet Christ." "If you have in you the Spirit of truth and filial devotion and self-sacrifice, that is Christ." "He will come to you as self-surrender, as asceticism, as yoga, as the life of God in man, as obedient and humble sonship. *For Christ is nothing more.*"

This lecture proves to a demonstration, not merely that the Christ to whom Mr. Sen's enthusiastic homage is paid is only a series of ideas, but that his theism is tinged with pantheism, notwithstanding his declarations representing that system as "blasphemous" and "detestable." The difference between his pantheism and that of the Upanishads and the Vedantic school tends to establish our conclusion, that he derives

his inspiration from foreign sources rather than from those which he carefully enumerates. He believes in dualism, in nature and in man ; but he is prone to represent God, not as nature and humanity in all their entirety, but as "the immanent vitality" of nature and humanity. There is something *essentially* divine in man, and religious progress depends on its recognition and development. Who needs to be told that this is a foreign idea, not one derived from indigenous sources ?

Again, when Mr. Sen represents all that is good in Buddha and other reformers and prophets as the offshoot of the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, the Christian world need not dance or leap for joy. If Christ analyzed means love to God and man, the spirit of obedience and self-surrender, all that is good in humanity cannot but be traced to His abiding presence in the heart. But how are we to reconcile the two statements which make Him the brightest emanation from God, and therefore a concrete element of divine nature, and the abstract spirit of self-surrender ? On some future occasion the reconciliation will be effected by the admirably fertile imagination of the great Indian Reformer.

Meanwhile let us speak of the bases of his creed. In Brahma statements of these, there has been, as has been shown in a masterly manner in the second of Mr. Dyson's very able tracts on "Brahmo Dogmas," a great deal of vacillation and inconsistency. As has been stated in a former paper, the Vedas were held up in 1845 as the main if not the sole standard of theology and morality. But in 1855 the infallibility of these documents was abandoned, and the "volume of nature" took their place. All the truths of the new



faith were derived, mediately and inferentially, or by processes of induction and deduction, from the phenomena of nature. But in 1860 Mr. Sen published a series of tracts declaratory of the uselessness of reasoning processes in matters of religion, and indicative of a third source of religious knowledge, the "Rock of Intuition." It was assumed that religious truth was made known immediately and instinctively to every man by a faculty of moral perception in him, a faculty which led him to cognize religious truth as naturally as his eyes led him to see the light of the sun. This faculty, however, was ignored in Mr. Sen's lecture on "Great Men," delivered in 1866, and in it three *external* sources of information were pointed out—viz., nature, the writings of great men, and inspiration. "The universe exhibits on all sides innumerable works of design and beauty, of adaptation and method, which man cannot explain except by referring them to an intelligent First Cause, the Creator of this vast universe." "But is God manifested only in matter? There is another revelation: there is *God in history*. God manifests Himself in history through great men." "In inspiration the supreme soul is presented to us in our finite souls, and his saving light falls directly upon the eye of faith."

In his lecture on the "Future Church," delivered in 1863, or not long before his departure for England, he speaks of the unity of God and a trinity of manifestations in these words: "The future church will uphold the absolute infinity and unity of the Divine Creator, and will suffer no created thing or being to usurp His sovereignty. It will worship Him alone, and thoroughly set its face against every form of creature-worship. But while admitting the unity of the Divin-



ity, the Future Church will recognize a trinity of divine manifestations. God manifests Himself to us through external nature, through the inner spirit, and through moral greatness impersonated in man." Here again inspiration in the sense of direct communication of truth by God is ignored. It is, however, clearly brought out in his English addresses. "If we want knowledge, to whom do we go? Not to this book, not to that book, but to the Lord directly and immediately, and there is nothing that steps in between us and our Father." Two of the other sources are also mentioned: "Abandoning the infallibility of the Vedas, the Brahmos appealed to nature, to their own hearts, to their own religious intuitions in order to establish themselves upon a purely Theistic basis." The third source, the writings of great men, or the religious literature of the world, and perhaps its secular literature also, is implied, if not directly mentioned, in several of his statements.

The four sources of religious knowledge mentioned categorically are Nature, Intuition, the writings of Great Men, and Inspiration. There is a short passage in his "English Visit" which shows, along with a little confusion of ideas, that the greatest stress is laid on the last source. "They (Brahmos) then took a broader and more unexceptionable basis; they went into their own hearts in order to hear the voice of God, and they went forth throughout the amplitudes of nature in order to study in silence the direct revelation of God's Spirit." This sentence would at first sight lead one to the conclusion that the human heart and nature, instead of being sources of religious truth, are the abodes, so to speak, wherein the voice of God is heard distinctly. God does not speak *through* but *in* nature

and intuition, and so the revelation is immediate and direct, not mediate and indirect. This, however, is the apparent, but not the real meaning. The Brahmos admit that religious truths may be evolved from nature by processes of induction and deduction, and from human consciousness by calm reflection, and from the literature of the world by rigid scrutiny and analysis. But the truths thus evolved must be verified before adoption ; and this can be done by direct communications from God. Inspiration then is in particular cases a source of direct revelation, and in all cases the source of verification. Every truth, howsoever obtained or arrived at, whether by processes of reasoning based on natural phenomena, or by a careful analysis of the contents of our moral consciousness, or by an examination of the writings of the great prophets of the world, must be recognized as such in the light of God's immediate revelation before it can be made an article of belief. And therefore inspiration or a series of direct communications from God are, properly speaking, the abiding basis of the Brahmo creed. This extraordinary claim has been put forth with unhesitating confidence by our Brahmo friends of Mr. Sen's school or persuasion in behalf of their creed ; and if it only could be substantiated by proper evidence, its universal acceptability would remain unchallenged. But a particle of proof in favor of this stupendous claim has never been advanced.

Let us conclude this paper with a brief reference to what the Brahmo Somaj of India says about the tests of Brahmo doctrine. In the *Theistic Annual* for 1872 there is an article entitled "The Claims of Theism," and in it the tests and credentials of Brahmoism are presented logically and categorically—that is, in a

manner much less unconnected and rhapsodical than that in which they are referred to and hinted at in the writings of the great reformer. We are tempted to make one or two preliminary observations before alluding to them. The article begins with these words : "It has sometimes been asked by thoughtful persons, who are considerably interested in the progress of the Brahmo Somaj, as to what the Brahmos consider, in the light of claims, which their religion may assert upon the faith of mankind. It is admitted by many that the principles of that religion, as embodied in its progressive development, are peculiarly new and spiritual, but they lack the necessary evidence, the solid and substantial basis of facts upon which men can safely trust their religious future." What are the "new and spiritual principles" which Brahmoism has brought to light ? The simple creed of Babu Keshub Chunder Sen is as old almost as the world itself, and has not a single feature of novelty about it. Mr. Sen imitates some of the infidel writers of the day, and speaks of universal progress as the rule of life in all its departments. Religion has been keeping pace with science in its development ; and as new discoveries and inventions are the trophies scattered in the path of secular knowledge, new truths and principles are pointed to by the moral nature of man as its recent triumphs. But people in the habit of talking in this strain fail to explain why no progress has been made in the sphere of religion and morals during the last eighteen hundred years. While science has been advancing with giant strides, religion has continued stationary ; and not a single doctrinal truth or preceptive principle has been added to the stock of knowledge Christ and His apostles left behind them. In the sphere of religion especially there is

nothing new under the sun, because nothing new is needed.

Again the writer remarks : "The first great error of which every system of religion is, without exception, guilty, and which the Theists congratulate themselves on having escaped, is the universal narrowness which precludes the unreserved adoption of truth, irrespective of its origin or process of development." That is, Christians, for instance, are not willing to recognize and accept truth discovered outside the pale of their religion. If this were a fact, the charge of narrow-mindedness might justly be brought against them. But we emphatically deny the assumed fact, and we indignantly repel the charge. Nor do we in the slightest degree object to an adoption and appropriation of Scripture truths by the Brahmos or by any other class of people. What we object to is the vainglorious spirit which, after having taken truths from our religious books, parades them as its own discoveries ; and the spirit of thoughtless, superficial criticism which would trace to intuition truths which irrefragable evidence ascribes to supernatural revelation attested by stupendous miracles.

The three tests of Brahmo doctrine, enumerated in the article alluded to, are simplicity, spirituality, and usefulness—different obviously from the three tests of intuitive truths specified by Immanuel Kant—viz., simplicity, universality, and necessity. By simplicity, however, our Brahmo friends mean, not merely plainness of expression and transparency of meaning, but universal acceptability also. Hear what the writer says : "The simplicity of theistic doctrines is, we think, a great claim upon the faith of the candid inquirer. They are so plain, so unambiguous, and so

fundamental, that they make direct entrance into every heart, and strike a response upon the rudimentary chord of the moral and spiritual nature." If simplicity were of itself a great recommendation, the plain and unambiguous statement, there is *no* God, ought to be accepted by every candid inquirer ; but our friend's meaning doubtless is, that the Brahmo doctrines are so decidedly true, that the moment they are stated in intelligible terms they are instinctively accepted. And therefore all the tests of intuitive truths mentioned by Kant are included in his first test. Again, the word "spirituality" is used by him in this connection in the sense of inspiration, rather than in its ordinary sense. "We humbly and repentantly enter into the folds of our being, try to behold everything there by the light which kind heaven kindles in the bosom of every earnest worshipper." "What we know, little indeed as that may be, we know from the promptings of the supreme Spirit in the heart, the Spirit whom we worship and humbly labor to find." The third test is set forth in these words : "The practical importance of theistic doctrines constitutes another and a very strong claim. Our views being formed from life produce their reaction on life. Their spirituality, to which we have alluded, would mean nothing if it did not produce marked results upon the soul and upon the activities of life."

Let it be observed that two of these tests are superfluous—the first and the third. The second, inspiration, is enough to substantiate the claim of any truth to acceptance and homage. If the Brahmo doctrines have been revealed by God, or if they have been confirmed by the testimony of God, or, what is the same thing, by divine revelation, they are universally obliga-



tory. But what proof do our friends give for the authority thus claimed for them ? All their arguments under this head may be summarized in the following syllogism : They that seek religious truth earnestly cannot but find it ; we have sought truth earnestly, *ergo*, we have found it. Granting the major premiss, we have to be assured that our friends have sought truth with sufficient earnestness, with perfect freedom from prejudice, with a mind thoroughly unbiassed, an intellect calm and dispassionate, and a heart entirely loyal to truth. The man must be bold indeed who can affirm that he has been seeking truth exactly in the spirit in which it ought to be sought, and that if he fails to attain it his failure is a reflection on the justice and goodness of God. The third is a double test, and points to the beneficent results of the system on the soul and on the world. So far as the inward results are concerned, the assertion of the Brahmos is the only ground of conviction. It is after all a very weak ground ; for, prone as we are to give them credit for probity and veracity, we are led by the superficiality of thought stamped on their creed, and the contradictions into which they have allowed themselves to be betrayed, to withhold perfect confidence from their judgment. Again, as to external results, nothing as yet accomplished by Brahmoism can bear the slightest comparison with the fruits of the benevolent activity and humanitarian enthusiasm with which Comtism was associated not long since ! The first therefore is the only test admissible, and, judged by it, the peculiar features of Brahmoism are found wanting. This we hope to show in our next discourse.



## CHAPTER IV.

### PROGRESSIVE SOMAJ CONTINUED.

It is time for us to show that the affirmations and negations of Brahmoism, barring the fundamental truths forming the creed of pure naturalism, are, judged by the test to which they have a right to appeal, and to which they do appeal oftener perhaps than to the others, groundless. This test is intuition, or the moral consciousness of man, and it is the only test which is admissible in an argument with them—the two others, inspiration and utility being, as has already been shown, emphatically not so.

So long as our Brahmo friends confine themselves to general beliefs and vague assertions, they speak the language of intuition, and nothing can be said against them. Mr. Sen's general creed is thoroughly unexceptionable. No sensible man has anything to say against him when he enlarges on the doctrines of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man ; or when he expresses his belief in God, immortality, and human accountability ; or when he represents love to God and man as the essence of practical religion. These vague generalities are found imbedded in one and all the religions of the world ; and we are only tempted to laugh at people prone to state these truisms with an air of consequence as if they were new discoveries. We maintain that in proclaiming these fundamental truths Christianity has an advantage to which

Brahmoism cannot possibly lay claim. Our holy religion takes them for granted, and scarcely goes the length of formally stating them. But what it says regarding them may be justly regarded as an authoritative proclamation emanating from the very throne of the Almighty. No room for doubt is left, no hesitancy or vacillation of faith is possible. The scientific man, prone to laugh at every item of knowledge that comes from regions beyond the narrow horizon of the senses—prone, moreover, to regard with distrust the general beliefs called intuitions—is bound to accept the fundamental truths of religion on the ground of objective revelations attested by an array of evidence which even he cannot gainsay. And the man whom a long-continued and almost irresistible habit of self-examination has led to a complete distrust of self and its utterances, cannot but be too glad to find those convictions of his heart, of which, though prone to regard them with distrust, he cannot get rid, confirmed by declarations the divine origin of which he is made to see and admit by irrefragable evidence. Christianity obviates all scepticism about the fundamental truths of religion by calling down, so to speak, an attestation of heaven in their behalf. While Brahmoism places them on the basis of intuition—a basis on the whole weak, though sound—Christianity sees them built up, so to speak, on the rock of that Word which shall abide though heaven and earth pass away. But as regards these general truths let us have no quarrel with Brahmoism. Let us accept them on the testimony of intuition, and without such confirmation as the Bible brings to their aid.

But these truths form a religion which is not obviously suited to the condition of fallen man, however well adapted it might be to the condition of those

intelligences who have never fallen from their original state of purity and righteousness. Something more is needed—namely, a plan of salvation adequate to the emergencies of his case to complete it. From generals, therefore, Brahmoism must descend to particulars ; and when it does so it declares war against the species of proof on which it builds its superstructure of doctrine and precept—viz., its vaunted “ rock of intuition.” To prove this, let us judge its varied affirmations and negations by its own crucial test.

And the very first of its affirmations is that religion is a science of human origin, and partakes of the progressive character of the other sciences. It is not necessary to prove this position of the Somaj by quotations from the writings of its champions. One of the articles of the revised creed of the Adi Somaj, published in 1866, in a tract called “ Brief Survey,” runs thus : “ The Brahmos believe that the religious condition of man is progressive, like the other parts of his condition in this world.” In an article on the “ Development of the Brahmo Somaj,” in the *Theistic Annual* of 1875, “ the progressiveness” of religion is thus set forth : “ The third and last requisite of a creed ought to be its progressiveness. The great battle between theology and science cannot terminate, unless the religious beliefs of mankind are so constructed as to include, embrace, and welcome the truths of all departments of human speculation and research. If religion has not the elasticity, the capacity, the life, and the strength to adapt itself to philosophy and science, philosophy shall progress, and faith lag behind.” The theory propounded in these sentences is well known to the public. Religion is a science as decidedly human as psychology, and it has been making progress since

the beginning, from infancy to youth, from youth to manhood, and from manhood to old age. But it has not reached its limit of progression yet ; on the contrary, like other sciences, it is on the move, and its future form may be as different from its present shape, as that is different from the fetich type in which it appeared in its infantine state. What Theodore Parker says of his " Absolute Religion " may be said of the sciences in general, and is fitted to set forth its human origin.

Now with reference to this specious theology we may fearlessly affirm that intuition cannot possibly be appealed to in its favor. It involves a question of history rather than one of intuitional belief. And history with its stubborn facts is marshalled against it. The very fact alluded to in a foregoing paper, that religion has continued stationary during the last eighteen hundred years, while the sciences have been making wonderful progress, tends to neutralize the theory in question. Add to this the fact that history draws a broad line of demarcation between the origin of true religion and that of science, and proves by an array of stupendous but undeniable miracles " that a series of preparatory revelations culminated in Christ, by whose immediate disciples the volume of inspiration was closed and sealed." History then belies the theory in question ; but whether its groundlessness is disclosed by history or not, one thing is certain—viz., that intuition says nothing about it. If it is to be sustained at all, it must have a basis different from the rock of intuition.

Religion may in one sense be represented as a progressive science. The truths imbedded in the Bible have no more been thoroughly mastered, either in a

mass or in detail, than the truths contained in the volume of nature. And, therefore, as the science of exegesis makes progress, clearer ideas of the truths revealed will be carried out, and fresher and better classifications will be attempted with success. But the volume of inspiration will not have a word added to or taken from it. Let our Brahmo friends point to a new truth, or truth not discoverable in the Bible—truth, be it observed, not theory—and we shall admit their view of the progressiveness of religion.

2. Another of their affirmations, akin to the one already taken notice of, is that men in these days are inspired as Paul and Peter and John were. Babu Keshub Chunder Sen's theory of great men, alluded to in a former paper, may be cited as proof of the tenacity with which this position is held; and his recent utterances, to which reference will have to be made in a subsequent paper, make it evident that he represents himself as inspired in the same sense in which the great founders of the varied religions of the world were, in his opinion. He does not call himself a prophet, but he represents himself as "a singular man," and claims inspiration in unmistakable terms. And as there is, in his opinion, no generic difference between the inspiration with which Paul, for instance, was favored and that which made Shakespeare the extraordinary poet he was, his claim to inspiration is equivalent to a claim to being inspired in the same sense in which the ancient Jewish prophets and their successors, the apostles, were. But it is to be observed that these inspired writers did something more than merely claim inspiration. They brought forward in attestation of their claim such credentials as their enemies could not gainsay. They revealed new truths, and worked miracles to set forth the stamp of



heaven on their declarations and teachings. But the inspired heroes of the day have nothing new, barring their vagaries, to teach ; and they fail to bring forward even a shadow of evidence in support of the extraordinary claims they advance. Nor can this affirmation on their part be substantiated by intuitive evidence, involving as it does a question of fact, not an intuition of the mind.

3. Another of the affirmations found wanting when judged by their own standard is that sin punishes and annihilates itself. In a paper on "Sin, its Origin, Nature, and Punishment," in the *Theistic Annual* for 1873, we have such assertions as these : "The punishment of sin is sin." "When sin becomes loathsome, the mind that is sinful lives with perpetual loathsomeness; the torments of hell are within it. Thus sin is its own punishment." "Righteousness grows forever, and triumphs in the end ; sin slowly kindles the fire, which ultimately consumes it, and works its own destruction." "We consider punishment not to be vengeful, but remedial. I have said sin consumes itself, and works out its own cure."

It must be admitted that the Brahmo theory regarding sin and salvation is involved in great confusion, and statements can be brought out of their writings fitted to oppose the sentiments expressed in these quotations. But it is certain that the theory excludes the notion of arbitrary punishment annexed to sin. Disease and death, distress and calamity, indigence and disgrace are scarcely represented as punishments attached to sin by the justice of God. They are attributed to certain immutable laws at work, and the punishment is confined to its effects within the heart. It is expressly said that "the punishment of sin then only commences .



when the soul learns to aspire after God.” When the soul sees the loathsome effects of sin in it, it is pained, and led to repentance, faith, and prayer, and the ultimate result is its deliverance from sin. In this way sin punishes and annihilates itself. Both our instincts and experience are marshalled against this idea. We naturally and instinctively associate physical calamities with sin. We of course do not look upon pain as an unmixed evil, and we readily admit that in the dispensations of Providence it performs functions on the whole beneficial. But we instinctively look upon it as an important factor in that economy of a punitive character which was ushered in by sin, either in anticipation of its appearance or subsequent to it. The existence of pain is no more a necessity than the existence of sin, and the mistakes into which rationalism, in and out of India, has fallen are traceable to its unmistakable tendency to regard them both as such.

4. Another affirmation of Brahmoism is that repentance is the only possible atonement for sin. This sentiment is the vital principle of its creed, and runs through all the declarations with which it is associated. On page 21 of the well-known tract, “The Brahmo Somaj Vindicated,” we have this statement : “ True atonement means to be at one with God ; true repentance, by delivering us from sin, brings us back to God ; hence our belief that repentance is atonement—yea, the only atonement possible.” Mr. Sen himself, in his “ Lectures and Tracts” (p. 114), thus speaks of repentance : “ True penitence humbles man to the dust, and makes him put his entire trust in the Lord for the purpose of salvation. As such, repentance is essential to faith ; for not till man’s proud head is humbled down under an overpowering sense of his own unworthiness

would he cling to God's feet ; not till he distrusts himself would he trust the redeeming and all-sufficient grace of God. Repentance begins the good work of conversion, which faith and prayer carry on. By opening the eyes of the sinner to his iniquities it fosters a longing for deliverance ; faith and prayer act as guides, and safely lead the penitent sinner into the kingdom of heaven, where he is regenerated by divine grace !" In this declaration salvation is traced, as it should be, to divine grace ; but what is to be taken special notice of is the fact that no such intermediate link between repentance and the grace of God, as is implied in the Christian doctrine of the atonement or the universal doctrine of sacrifice, is admitted. Repentance is represented to be the only atonement possible for sin. But this assertion, as we showed in a foregoing paper, militates against our instinctive beliefs or intuitions, which, while representing repentance as absolutely necessary, points out the necessity of something else—the sacrifice of an innocent victim for sin. Buddha declared a war of extermination against the universally believed doctrine of sacrifice, but his followers all over the world offer sacrifices in spite of his positive declarations and injunctions to the contrary. Such is the power of instinct !

5. The last affirmation of Brahmoism of which we shall take notice is that there is left in fallen man such recuperative power as may enable him to work out his own salvation, under, of course, the grace of God. Hear what Mr. Sen says on the subject : " In the religion of the world man is his own guide, and to a great extent his own saviour. He depends upon his own faculties and powers for the attainment of truth, and for deliverance from sin" (" Lectures and Tracts,"

p. 100). The reader ought once more to be reminded that Mr. Sen's utterances under this head, like almost all his utterances, are characterized by such inconsistency and incoherence that passages may be culled out of his writings fitted to upset our conclusion ; but as he has always systematically opposed the supernatural in the proper sense of the term, he is bound to posit some such recuperative power to render salvation in the case of fallen man a possibility. It must be admitted that no Christian even speaks by the grace of God more gratefully than he does in every case of conversion or regeneration ; but his whole scheme of salvation would be meaningless if this grace were for a moment supposed capable of acting except through means, strictly speaking, natural. We are therefore, on the whole, right in concluding that according to the Brahmo creed man has left in him some recuperative power, which, properly utilized, might lead to his being saved. But man does not instinctively look to his own faculties and powers for the attainment of truth and for his deliverance from sin. On the contrary, he looks up for supernatural help, naturally and instinctively, and consequently his moral consciousness is marshalled against the Brahmo position.

All the affirmations of Brahmoism are, judged by their own criterion, the rock of intuition, utterly groundless. This may with equal justice be said of all the negations which cut so grand a figure in its creed. In both its affirmations and negations Brahmoism systematically opposes the very principle which it loudly and ostentatiously represents as the fundamental basis of its faith.

1. The foremost place among the negations of Brahmoism is occupied by the statement : Miracles are not

possible. It is not necessary to bring forward proofs in corroboration of this negative assertion, inasmuch as it runs through the entire literature of Brahmoism and underlies the entire superstructure of its doctrine and precept. In view, however, of this statement we are tempted to repeat what John Foster said about rank atheism. The wonder turns upon the prodigious amount of knowledge which has brought our Brahmo friends to the conclusion that miracles are not possible. Do these gentlemen pretend to a thorough knowledge of the past history of the universe, such as may enable them to feel warranted in affirming that no miracle was ever wrought by God during the eternity that is gone by ? Is their knowledge of the future so complete as to justify the affirmation on their part that no miracle shall ever be wrought in the eternity that is to come ? Is their knowledge of the universe, as it exists now, so complete that they can stand up and affirm with oracular assurance that the immutable law of nature is not being interfered with in any portion of any of the innumerable worlds of which it is composed, in any nook or corner of its limitless and illimitable expanse ? Again, does the Brahmo profess to have so thoroughly measured the power of the Almighty as to be able to point out with sufficient accuracy the circumstances under which it is converted into utter impotency ? Has he so adequate an idea of each of the elements which constitute divine wisdom, or so adequate a knowledge of the principles by which his administration of the universe is guided, or of the laws and forces through which He acts, as might make it philosophical on his part to put forward a statement of such wonderful breadth and compass ? He must indeed be himself a God in order to be able

to affirm the impossibility of the supernatural with oracular assurance.

The inconsistency of this statement with the fundamental article of his creed—viz., there is a God of boundless power and wisdom, as well as infinite holiness—is too obvious to be formally mentioned. Even John Stuart Mill affirms that if the existence of God were admitted a miracle could not reasonably be represented as impossible. Had the Brahmo been a materialist or a pantheist, such an assertion on his part might have had the shadow of a reason to justify it ; but springing from the lips of a theist it cannot but sound strange.

But let us judge this statement by the great test of Brahmoism, intuition. That men instinctively believe in the possibility of the supernatural is proved by the fact that the belief is upheld by all the religions of the world, and prevails in every country, and among all classes of people, a few conceited persons excepted. The universality of the belief tends to set forth its instinctive character, while nothing has ever been brought forward fitted to place it in antagonism to intuition.

When the impossibility of the supernatural is insisted upon, the idea of a supernatural revelation attested by supernatural occurrences is of course precluded. But belief in such a revelation is universal, and in accord with the moral instincts of humanity. Judged by the great criterion of the Somaj, its antagonism to what is sneeringly called a book revelation, is misplaced. It is not at all difficult to prove that such opposition is incompatible with the claim to inspiration it has always advanced, to a great extent of late. When a truth is made manifest by inspiration, and put upon record, the result is a paper revelation. The Brahmos have their



symbols and standards, all to be traced, according to their assumptions, to divine inspiration, and therefore to be accepted without hesitation. Their creeds are paper creeds, and they, each of them separately and all of them joined together, embody a book revelation, the nightmare against which they have been fighting with might and main.

2. Another of the negations of Brahmoism is that God, while ready to hear and answer our petitions for spiritual blessings, does not and cannot listen to our prayers for temporal blessings. The reasoning we have arrayed against the first negation may with great propriety be marshalled against this. The Brahmo must know a great deal indeed before he can feel justified in affirming that God cannot hear and answer our prayers for blessings appertaining to our physical life. He must study and master the varied principles of the divine administration, must have a complete insight into the thoughts and purposes of God, as well as into the workings of the varied forces of the universe, ere he is justified in venturing such an assertion. But let us judge it by his own standard or criterion—by the “rock” on which he builds his doctrinal and preceptive superstructure. Nothing is more certain than the fact that men instinctively pray for temporal blessings as well as for those of a spiritual character. When hungry or athirst, or sick or in prison, man instinctively looks up to God for help ; and so strong is this instinct that even those who call themselves atheists, or plume themselves on their deliverance from the superstitions of a theological age, are overcome by it. Anecdotes are afloat fitted to show that atheists, when faced by sudden danger, instinctively cry to God for help. And if prayers for temporal blessings are impertinent and useless, no



dependence can possibly be placed on our moral instinct, and the conclusion is irresistible that God is tantalizing us by implanting in our hearts longings which are never to be gratified. The religious feeling in man—his sense of dependence on a higher Being, the basis of Brahmoism—irresistibly leads us to pray for blessings pertaining to our physical life as well as for those appertaining to our higher nature ; and the system which taboos particular kinds of prayer and allows others mocks universal instinct, which has been represented as the groundwork of all religion.

It is moreover to be observed that the reasons brought forward to support this position may be marshalled against every species of prayer—for spiritual as well as temporal blessings. These are stated in the following quotation from Mr. Sen's works : " Men cannot pray for physical blessings, because physical phenomena happen according to immutable laws. They can pray only for spiritual blessings." Now, is Mr. Sen ignorant of the well-known fact that spiritual phenomena are, like physical phenomena, guided by immutable laws ? And if such guidance is an insuperable obstacle in the way of prayer for physical blessings, prayer for spiritual blessings must also be tabooed or represented as both impertinent and useless. Laws in the moral world are as fixed and immutable as laws in the physical world ; and if it is impossible for God to interfere with their regular course, all talk of religion is bosh.

3. Another well-known negation of the Somaj is that God cannot pardon sin. God, its champions justly affirm, is just, and as justice demands the adequate punishment of sin, He cannot remit it without being, in plain English, unjust. Again, punishment follows

sin as an inevitable sequence, and therefore God cannot remit it without interfering with the established laws of causation—that is, without making a miracle, the impossibility of which is loudly and emphatically proclaimed. In the pamphlet entitled “The Brahmo Somaj Vindicated” (p. 22) we have this emphatic statement: “Repentance will save the sinner, says Brahmoism. Save him from what? Not from the punishment due to sins already committed, for divine justice is immutable and its decrees irreversible, but save him from sin. You may fabricate a convenient theory of atonement, and do what you like; . . . nothing will save you from the punishment you deserve. The moment you have sinned, justice will rise up and say, ‘Sinner, thou hast sinned, and must be adequately punished.’” Mr. Dyson, in his able pamphlet on the “Brahmic Dogma of Divine Forgiveness,” presents the following extract from a tract entitled “Essential Principles”: “Every sinner must suffer the consequences of his own sins, sooner or later, in this world or in the next.” He presents other quotations from Brahmo writings in corroboration of the Brahmo theory of the unforgiveableness of sin, but these will suffice.

This negation may be disposed of precisely in the same way in which the others have been. The Brahmo must know a great deal more than he does to feel warranted in proclaiming, as he is doing, the unforgiveableness of sin. He must have an adequate and correct idea of the justice of God and a thorough knowledge of the principles of the divine administration before he can commit himself with logical consistency or philosophic fairness to so bold a declaration. Again, his assertion that God cannot interpose between

sin and its punishment in consequence of the immutability of laws of nature is tantamount to the assertion that God cannot work miracles—an assertion ludicrously unphilosophical, though frequently made.

But this negation, judged by the standard of the Somaj—the moral consciousness of man—appears utterly groundless. Men instinctively believe in the forgiveableness of sin, and instinctively pray for pardon. To go no further, the religious literature of our own country makes it evident that man naturally believes both in the willingness and power of God to forgive, and prays for pardon as well as purification. The Rishis of the Rig Veda times did not believe in the propriety of restricting prayer to spiritual blessings, for they were never tired of praying for houses, wives, children, cows, sheep, wealth, and prosperity. Nor did they believe in the unforgiveableness of sin, inasmuch as they often prayed that the gods might pardon their own and the sins of their forefathers. And their example has been instinctively followed by all classes of the people of our country at all times, in spite of the doctrine of transmigration, which declares all interposition, divine or human, between sin and its merited punishment both improper and unavailing. And men everywhere will be led by an irresistible instinct to pray for pardon in spite of the Brahmo reproduction of the idea of unforgiveableness associated with this exploded doctrine. The Brahmos in affirming the impossibility of pardon are overturning the foundations of their own creed—their moral intuitions—which are one and all marshalled against an idea so obviously strange and so cruelly disappointing.

Again, we may ask, with what words of comfort or consolation do the Brahmos approach us? If they

cannot assure us of pardon, what on earth or in heaven have they to give us ? We are conscious of sin. Our consciousness of sin is a complex rather than a simple mental state, and it leads us to a recognition of its malignity, guilt, and obnoxiousness to punishment. Both from the punishment as well as from the malignity, depravity, or impurity of sin we long for deliverance. It may be easy to say that we ought to be willing manfully to accept the punishment which our own sins bring upon us, while naturally desirous to get rid of their degrading consequences on the heart. But, constituted as we are, we naturally shrink from and deprecate the suffering as well as the depraving influence associated with sin ; and it is the glory of Christianity to regard us in its exhortations and denunciations exactly as we are, not as we might be. The cry of our heart is pardon, pardon, pardon. Without pardon it is agitated and restless, and nothing but pardon can bring it peace. And if the Brahmo religion cannot come to us with assurances of pardon it has not a word of comfort or consolation to speak to us. According to it the prospect before us is gloomy indeed ! We are daily adding to the stock of our sins, and shall go on adding to it to the last moment of our lives. We are heaping up unto ourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. We shall have then to leave this world with the sure prospect of punishment before us. What a gloomy prospect this ! But the Brahmo points to a ray of light flickering through the deep gloom. The punishment before us is, according to him, terminable, and the night will end in a day of unclouded sunshine. This assertion brings us to the last negation of Brahmoism—the last, we mean, of which we shall take notice.

Against no doctrine have the Brahmos inveighed more energetically and more systematically than the doctrine of eternal punishment. Numerous passages can be quoted from Mr. Sen's writings and those of his coadjutors fitted to set forth what may be called the Brahmo antipathy to eternal punishment ; but the following from his "English Visit" (p. 175) will suffice : "It would be an insult to the majesty of God's throne, it would be a blasphemy against divine mercy, to say that He will wrathfully condemn any sinner to eternal punishment." Let us repeat what we have said under so many heads. The Brahmo in decrying eternal punishment exposes himself to the charge of rashness, which may properly be brought against the man who stands up and affirms, "There is no God." Our friend must know a great deal more than he does—must, in short, be omniscient—before he can assume such an attitude with even philosophical fairness. He must have a thorough knowledge of the demands of divine justice, and so be in a position to pronounce an opinion as to the congruity or incongruity of eternal punishment therewith. He must have a thorough knowledge of all the principles of the divine administration before he can denounce such punishment as inconsistent with them. He must be able to show by chapter and verse that eternal punishment is not fitted to promote the ends of God's government of the universe, or secure the highest good of the largest number of God's rational creatures. In a word, he must be a God to be able to denounce as he does eternal punishment as inconsistent with the wisdom, goodness, and mercifulness of God. But he says that his own feelings revolt from such a doctrine. What then ? His feelings, guided as they are by sin, revolt from many things that are



good. Are his feelings to be made the measure of truth? The feelings of the prisoner always revolt from the sentence pronounced against him by the judge, but these are never brought forward as an irrefragable argument against its wisdom or justice.

It is not our object now to stand up for eternal punishment : it may be a creation of superstitious fear. But we do maintain that our friends cannot with philosophical fairness denounce it as inconsistent with the wisdom or the benevolence of God. They have no right to say what the punishment of sin will be, how long it will continue, or whether it must in every case be remedial and nothing more. These are matters that can be settled only by divine revelation. The Word of God must be studied, and if eternal punishment is clearly taught therein, it must be accepted ; otherwise not.

It is not necessary for us to remark here that the doctrinal platform of the Somaj, together with what we have called its affirmations and negations, does not present a single novel feature. In its adoption of the principles we have set forth the incongruity of, according to the criterion it has itself laid down, as well as those of a more general character, it has shown indiscriminative imitativeness rather than originality or breadth of thought. But its imitativeness reaches its climax when it adopts Christian terminology in the sense attached to it as a whole, and to its varied elements by infidel writers, whose writings, though unacknowledged, have done more to fashion its theology and creed than the religious books from which it professedly derives its inspiration. Brahmoism has its Unity in Trinity, its Incarnation, its Atonement, its Redemption, its Regeneration, its Gospel, its Revelation, its



Law and the Prophets, its Church and Sacraments. But each of these important terms expresses in Brahmo theology a sense very different from, if not contradictory to, what is attached to it in the creed of the Christian. Its Trinity, for instance, is not the Triune Jehovah of the Christians, a Threefold Distinction in the Godhead, hypostatic but not essential, but one God appearing in a Trinity of manifestations, in nature, history, and the human soul. Its Incarnation is not Emmanuel, God with us, but the typical Great Man with a great deal more of divinity in him than falls to the lot of ordinary mortals—a Shakespeare in the region of poetry, a Bacon in the region of philosophy, a Newton in the region of demonstrative science, or a Sen in the region of religion and morals. And in this manner all these terms are divested of their supernatural significance, and made to shrink into truths which at first sight commend themselves as rational to our sin-enfeebled and sin-corrupted minds, but which nevertheless are incongruous with the deepest instincts of our fallen nature. But if the transforming process had been new or discovered by the Brahmos, some degree of originality might legitimately have been claimed by them. But they have been imitators from beginning to end, have copied the terms and the meanings attached to them by infidel writers, without study, thought, or discrimination.

But their characteristic imitativeness is shown in their devotional practices as well as in the doctrinal platform they occupy. They call their temple the Church of India ; and they present in their forms of worship a mixture, somewhat odd, of the holy spirituality of Christian worship and the noisy demonstrativeness of Vaishnavism. Mr. Sen in his devotional inno-

vations has proved a chip of the old block as well as a discernor of the times. He has not failed to appreciate the practical usefulness as well as the dignity and holy but not wild fervor of Christian worship ; and from the beginning he has been anxious to utilize almost all its elements in his temple—the sweet psalm, the impassioned but at the same time properly restrained prayer, and the religious discourse instinct with fervid eloquence, but neither drawn out into inappropriate length nor marred by unbecomting coarseness. But he seems to have been unable to divest himself of the devotional influences brought to bear upon him when brought up in a home of Vaishnavism, amid the din and clamor of a form of worship as noisy and indecent as the Christian is calm and dignified. In effecting a union of these two forms in his devotional innovations, he has, on the whole, acted wisely, inasmuch as he is likely to attract by either the one or the other form men of various tempers and dispositions—men in whom the intellect predominates as well as those under the guidance of impulsive feeling more than of reason and thought. But it is to be noted that in the forms of worship which he has been utilizing, as well as in the doctrines and principles which he has adopted as the watchwords of his creed, he has been an imitator rather than an originator.

It is not necessary to say that in instituting reform associations, starting journals, publishing pamphlets, opening schools, and organizing meetings of all descriptions he has been treading a path unknown to Indian reformers of a bygone age—a path new indeed, but one marked out for him not by his own inventive genius, but by what may be called the spirit of the times. Even in the employment of the means he has

had recourse to for the purpose of propagating the new faith he has been an imitator, not an originator. His literary labors are copies of those of the accredited propagators of the Christian faith ; his meetings are imitations of those held by Christian people ; and his missionaries are editions, on the whole inferior, both in mental calibre and in enlightened zeal, of the missionaries whom he occasionally takes the trouble of instructing in the first principles of the Christian faith. In the employment of these means he has shown commendable judiciousness, such as is never shown by those missionaries who, ignorant of the fact that the age of Fakirism and dirt-cultus is fast passing away, publicly regret the absence from the native church of that austere and repulsive spirit of asceticism from which, if properly developed, they would themselves shrink in horror. We do not at all find fault with him for living in a style above mediocrity in the country ; and if he only gave up his groundless pretensions to asceticism, even in the rather peculiar sense in which he uses the term, nothing could be said against his habits of life, which, as those of a member of a very respectable family in Calcutta, a man of superior education and brilliant parts, and a friend and protégé of men of exalted position in society and in official circles, entitle him to consideration and respect.

It must, however, be confessed that Mr. Sen's zeal in this direction has not always been accompanied with discretion. The history of the Somaj proves that its benevolent schemes have on the whole been premature and abortive. He instituted a society, under the name of Indian Reform Association, with great *éclat* ; but the society, according to the testimony of sensible observers like Pundit Siva Nath Sastri, lives by fits and

starts—that is, continues as a rule dormant, though now and then lashed into a sort of momentary feverish excitement. A female normal school was opened under its auspices, but it is now among the things that were. Several institutions, such as industrial schools and night schools, were started only to be given up, each after a short season of trial. A temperance journal sprang into life and died precisely in the same manner. The *Theistic Annual*, started to keep the public informed of the views and proceedings of the Somaj, was replaced by a quarterly, of which nothing has been heard for some time past. Almost all the practical schemes of the Somaj have proved abortive, indicating a degree of rashness on the part of the projectors which tends to make them at best unreliable guides in matters of religion.

As to the numerical prosperity of the Somaj before the second disruption, nothing can be said with any degree of accuracy. Brahmo statements on the subject are characterized by an exaggeration which makes them altogether worthless. That which kills the Brahmo Somaj, in the opinion of sensible observers, is the sensational style in which everything connected with it is reported. Brahmos speak of churches, which in many cases mean individual worshippers rather than congregations; theological colleges, which mean individual pupils rather than associations of students of divinity; masses of literature, which mean small tracts and fly-leaves; and grand revival meetings, which mean meetings not worth taking notice of. The sensationalism to which Mr. Sen has recourse in his sayings and doings withdraws public confidence from his statements regarding the number of his followers and other important matters. We had a talk with a very worthy

Brahmo missionary, now dead, during the high and palmy days of the movement, and he unhesitatingly stated his conviction that there were not three hundred men in all India who might justly be called Brahmos. The number has since gone down, and the fact that the Brahmos, while they give the number of the Somajes they have in India, never give the number of enrolled members, proves their unwillingness to look at and present the dark side of the picture.

Mr. Sen believes not only in the fulness of recuperative power in man, but in the fulness of such power in the Hindu nation. Hear what he says in his "English Visit" (p. 300) : "There is still an inherent moral force in India which will enable it to work out its own redemption, not under the instruction of this man or that man, but under the direct inspiration of the holy and merciful God." It is not our object to contradict this statement. We only content ourselves with the remark that there is a diversity of opinion in his own camp with reference to this assumed power. His own emphatic allegations lead us to the conclusion that the essence of the religion fitted to regenerate this country lies in the doctrine of the fatherhood of God, and its corollary the brotherhood of men. Whence has Mr. Sen received these principles ? From an indigenous or from a foreign source ? In an article in the *Theistic Annual* for 1873, headed "Relation of the Brahmo Somaj to Hinduism and Christianity," the writer, evidently Mr. Sen's right hand-man, Babu Pratap Chunder Mazorndar, thus sets forth the source of one of these ideas : "The idea of the brotherhood and equality of all mankind before God, I am sorry to say, is not to be found, because it is never recognized, in any of our ancient writings. The idea is decidedly foreign, Western,

and I think I might say Christian.” The same writer\* in the same article traces the doctrine, from which the idea of universal brotherhood is a deduction, to Christianity : “I do not deny there are innumerable passages in Hindu books calling the Divine Being by all manner of names, but such names and the sentiments they embody are very different from the deep personality of spiritual relation typically expressed when Jesus exclaimed, ‘Our Father in heaven.’” Now if these two ideas are “to work out the redemption” of India, and if they have been imported from abroad, all talk of “our inherent moral force in India” fitted to effect its regeneration is bosh !



## CHAPTER V.

### THE NEW DISPENSATION.\*

THE example set by Mr. Sen, when he seceded from the Adi Somaj with an intelligent party of recusants, was pregnant with consequences which perhaps he did not foresee or anticipate. The reasons which led to his separation were destined to generate a disruption in the church which he subsequently organized. These were, as has already been indicated, protests against autocracy or papacy, and a growing tendency to radical reform. Or, to express the same thing in a simpler form, the first schism in the Brahmo camp was brought about by an irresistible tendency to democracy and radicalism. This tendency manifested itself in Mr. Sen's church, not long after its organization, and resulted in a crash which had scarcely, though it might have surely been anticipated from the very beginning.

In our account of the New Dispensation, and that of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj, we shall utilize the very valuable material skilfully brought together in Babu Siva Nath Sastri's very able pamphlet already referred to. The chain of argument presented by the learned champion of the Sadharan Somaj, every link of which is based on unexceptionable documentary evidence, is eminently fitted to support the conclusions to which he tries to bring the public with reference to the erratic

\* This, and all the chapters of this work, but the one which follows, were written before the death of Babu Keshub Chunder Sen.

proceedings of the New Dispensationists, and the varied questions in dispute between them and his own party. We are indebted to him for a masterly refutation of the vital principles of the New Dispensation, and a masterly exposition of those of the church he so worthily represents.

As early as 1863, the year which witnessed the completion and formal consecration of the Mandir or temple of the Progressive party, a great agitation was caused by the reprehensible proceedings of some of its members, and the apparent reluctance of the "minister to put them down with a high hand." These were nothing less than the public ascription to Mr. Sen of some of the names and titles and the homage due alone to God and a Divine Intercessor. "Persons were seen," says Mr. Sastri, "prostrating themselves at his feet, praying to him for intercession with God on their behalf, addressing him as Lord, Saviour, the Sinner's Way, etc., some besmearing their heads with the dust of his feet, others applying it to their tongues." These irregularities were the legitimate fruits of the impetuous and undiscerning enthusiasm stirred up by the Bhakti movement, or the introduction of Vaishnava forms of devotion and Vaishnava hymns slightly changed, such as could not retain their vitality except as revolving around a central personality.

A large party of Brahmos were justly scandalized by these irregular and idolatrous proceedings, and gathered around the standard of revolt raised by the two missionaries who had witnessed them, and construed Mr. Sen's non-interference into approval. This agitation, called in Brahmo literature the "Man-worship Agitation," did not subside till Mr. Sen had in a public letter disclaimed all sympathy with these practices and

stated his reasons for not putting them down. These reasons, however, were regarded as both evasive and unsatisfactory ; and therefore the cement by which the jarring elements were once more united was something like a patch-work reconciliation.

The peace thus brought about did not remain long undisturbed. A party, whose views on social problems, as well as those of a religious character, were in advance of those of Mr. Sen and his missionaries, was organized ; and serious dissensions arose from the collisions into which the conservative and radical elements were brought, as question after question of religious and social reform was raised. Once the secession of the advanced party was only obviated by a timely concession on the part of the conservatives. This occurred when the question of female emancipation was on the tapis. Mr. Sen and his missionaries were in favor of the Purdah System, or of compelling all Brahmo ladies without distinction to sit behind screens in the church during service ; but the opposition demanded in a peremptory manner the total abolition of a system so eminently fitted to perpetuate female seclusion. Their demands were at first treated with contempt ; but as they withdrew in a body from the communion, a compromise was effected, and the privilege of sitting with their wives outside of screens, in corners assigned them, was accorded to the recusant party, and peace was restored for a time.

But the liberal party looked upon this victory as only the first of a series, the result of which was to be the complete emancipation of the infant church from autocracy or papacy. They agitated for a constitution in the Somaj, a democratic form of government, and the transference of its property, the temple especially, from

a single trustee to the charge of a body of trustees. They tried in short to frame a code of rules and regulations to check the growth of that personal influence, which they looked upon as inconsistent with the genius of Brahmoism, and ruinous to its interests. But their agitation only widened the breach between the parties so decidedly that a permanent reconciliation between them appeared hopeless.

Nor were matters of a purely doctrinal character left out of the range of debatable topics. A couple of doctrines, by no means new to the Somaj, had special attention called to them, and only resulted in intensifying the agitation in progress within its precincts. These were the doctrines of Adesh or Divine command, and Bidhán or dispensation. The germs of these doctrines had appeared in Mr. Sen's famous discourse on "Great Men." The theory propounded in that lecture, viz., that in the religious history of the world God raises up "great men," or men endowed with special powers and charged with special revelations to introduce new dispensations, demanded by moral exigencies of a peculiar stamp, had been held in abeyance for some time. But it was revived when the breach was widening between the conservatives and the liberals in the Somaj; and the result was open recalcitration on the part of the latter. They first of all tried milder measures to lead Mr. Sen and his missionaries to an open renunciation of these dangerous principles; but when these failed, they organized a regular opposition, and started a monthly journal, called *Somadārshi* or *The Liberal*, to protest against them.

These facts will show that combustible elements were being heaped up in the Somaj between the years 1872 and 1878, and all that was needed to produce a

conflagration was a spark. This was applied by the marriage of Mr. Sen's daughter to the young Mahara-jah of Kuch Behar. This event was protested against by the liberals as flagrantly inconsistent with the principles which Mr. Sen had himself propounded and fought for, and which, mainly in consequence of his exertions, had entered into the very texture of the marriage law of the Somaj.

One of the social reforms for which Mr. Sen had agitated with heart and soul, and which he had been mainly instrumental in bringing about, was Act III. of 1872, which fixes the minimum marriageable age of native girls at fourteen, and that of native lads at eighteen. The age limitations are among the prominent reformatory features of the Act, and for them it is mainly indebted to Mr. Sen. When it was passing through its varied stages of development, Mr. Sen issued a circular, elicited and published the opinions of some of the highest medical authorities, and brought these to bear upon the deliberations of the legislature. And when the limitations were finally agreed to, he looked upon and represented them as in reality below the mark ; and he hailed them as only the small beginnings of a reform, which was to be matured in time by further encroachments upon the pernicious custom of early marriage prevalent in the country. The following extract from one of his speeches on the subject, presented in Pundit Siva Nath Sastri's pamphlet, proves this to a demonstration :

“ Thirdly, we contemplate the abolition of early or premature marriages. There has always been a large amount of uncertainty and doubt in the public mind, as to the minimum marriageable age of native girls. Reference was therefore made to leading medical authorities in Calcutta, and what is the result ? It has been what we



had anticipated. The medical authorities in Calcutta almost unanimously declare that sixteen is the minimum marriageable age of native girls in this country. Dr. Charles makes a valuable suggestion : he holds that fourteen, being the commencement of adolescence, may for the present be regarded as the minimum age at which native girls may be allowed to marry, and may serve as a starting point for reform in this direction. In conformity with his suggestion, and the opinion given by the other referees, we have come to the conclusion that, for the present at least, it would be expedient to follow the provision in the Bill, which makes fourteen the minimum marriageable age of girls of this country, leaving it in the hands of time to develop this reform slowly and gradually into maturity and fulness."

The Kuch Behar marriage between a girl of thirteen and a lad of sixteen was a flagrant departure from the liberal principles embodied in this extract. The marriage moreover had other objectionable features, accompanied as it admittedly was with idolatrous rites and ceremonies. Mr. Sen published an able defence, giving prominence to the following points : 1, The marriage in question was a departure from the letter only, not from the spirit of the Act ; 2, Mr. Sen was not responsible for the idolatrous rites with which it was accompanied ; 3, it was eminently fitted to advance the interests of Brahmoism ; 4, Mr. Sen's consent was given in consequence of an express command from heaven. This statement of reasons reminds us of the lad who offered to state nine reasons for his father's non-appearance in a court of justice. "The first reason is that my father was dead when the court was held ; the second—" "Stop ! stop !" said the judge, "the first is enough." The express command from God, if it can be proved, is enough ; and the other reasons are superfluous !

But as the most potent of these reasons is not admissible, it is desirable to weigh the others, and see how



far they are fitted to uphold the cause, in behalf of which they are arrayed.

Mr. Sen's first plea is that the marriage was inconsistent with the letter rather than with the spirit of the Act he had been instrumental in getting passed. It is, however, not at all difficult to show that the very reverse of this is the truth. It is true that the marriage solemnized before the young Maharajah's departure for Europe was in fact nominal, though legally irrevocable. The parties were not to live as husband and wife before either of them had attained the marriageable age indicated in the Bill. But their consent was obtained when they were minors in the sight, so to speak, of the law, and when, in reality, they were not in a position to enter intelligently into an engagement of so serious a character. It was publicly alleged that the marriage was hastened by the authorities because it was feared that the youthful Maharajah might be tempted in European countries to fix his affections upon a person fairer, if not worthier, than Mr. Sen's amiable daughter. The very fact that such an apprehension was entertained is a proof that the young man's consent was prematurely obtained, and that therefore the marriage was celebrated in contravention both of the spirit and of the letter of the Act.

Nor can Mr. Sen be exonerated from all blame in the matter of the idolatrous rites with which the marriage was confessedly accompanied. Had he not literally rushed into the tempting scheme, he might have saved himself from the humiliation which was his punishment for precipitancy. A little decision on his part before his own consent was given, or when he was thrust out of the scene as not fit on account of his visit to England to play his part in the ceremony, or when idolatrous

rites stared him in the face, might, we think, have obviated all unworthy compromises on his part, though it might have made the marriage an impossibility at the eleventh hour. So bent was he on seeing the marriage solemnized that he neglected proper precautions, and proved weak and vacillating when he should have shown extraordinary firmness of character and strength of principle.

It is but fair to admit that Mr. Sen was allured, as he affirms in his defence, by glorious visions of prosperity as regards his church, as well as by domestic considerations. He, however, failed to see that a proceeding involving a compromise of principle could never permanently benefit a religious organization. The author of "Ecce Homo" gives due prominence to an event in Christ's life fitted to set forth His wisdom in preferring principle to expediency on an occasion when a great temptation was placed in His way. A great man, a ruler of the Jews, sought admission into His kingdom, but on terms which demanded a slight relaxation of its rules. The opportunity was grand, and the offer tempting ; and if Christ had been only a statesman, or a religious reformer, influenced by a regard to expediency rather than inflexible principle, He would have encouraged the illustrious applicant, and by a stroke of policy raised his despised community to a position of respectability and influence. But our Lord saw things in a different light ; and His stern demand of perfect, unconditional self-surrender obliged the ruler to go away sorrowful, for he was very rich. The result of Mr. Sen's temporizing policy is the present moribund condition of the Somaj.

We have represented Mr. Sen's last reason as inadmissible, except when bolstered up by proofs which he

does not even dream of bringing forward. We may, however, be permitted to remark that he could not call Adesh or special divine command to the rescue without contradicting one of the fundamental principles of the Somaj. That principle, in plain English, is that the laws of nature being immutable, prayer for temporal blessings is useless. God cannot interfere in the secular concerns of this life ; and therefore prayer having for its object the advancement of our temporal or domestic interests of a temporal character, He cannot listen to or encourage. The marriage of Mr. Sen's daughter with a wealthy and titled nobleman is after all a temporal affair, and therefore a special divine command relative to it is precluded by the principles of the Somaj. If it be said that the Brahmos look upon it as a great impetus to their cause, and therefore a spiritual blessing, our reply is, every temporal blessing may be converted into a spiritual blessing in this way.

Mr. Sen, in having the marriage celebrated in spite of the counsels, entreaties, and protests of the most intelligent and independent portion of his church, committed spiritual suicide. The result was the second great schism of Brahmoism, and the consequent establishment of a Somaj more progressive than his. Let us transfer to our pages the short account of its organization presented in Mr. Sastri's pamphlet : " At this point, those who were seeking to vindicate the principles of the church, and to place it on a constitutional basis, were obliged to appeal to the Brahmo body in general, and to the provincial Somajes in particular. Within the incredibly short period of a fortnight, as many as twenty-one Somajes, and more than four hundred individual Brahmos and Brahmicas, from all parts of India, replied, strongly urging the necessity of leav-

ing Mr. Sen with the church, and organizing a new society on a constitutional basis. Thus, in accordance with the expressed wishes of so many brethren, and the privately ascertained wishes of numerous others, the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj was duly organized on the 15th of May, 1878.’’

The secession of the recusant party may be looked at from two different standpoints—that occupied by Mr. Sen himself, and that occupied by the intelligent public. Judged by Mr. Sen’s standard, it was a blessing. It left him unfettered to realize his own great idea of religious reform ; and he lost no time in availing himself of the opportunity thus thrown in his way. But the blessing becomes a curse as soon as it is looked at from the standpoint occupied by the public. The most sensible among outsiders look upon the restraint laid upon the development of his most cherished schemes by the presence of the radical party as on the whole salutary ; and they trace the vagaries into which he has been betrayed since the schism as the sad but inevitable consequences of its withdrawal. The secession of the liberal party was in fact the secession of intelligence, independence of thought, and, therefore, of life from his Somaj ; and whatever prominence he subsequently enjoyed, being the result of blind rather than intelligent adherence, cannot possibly be of a permanent character. To set forth this we have only to indicate the very strange turn his movement has taken since the withdrawal of what contributed to maintain the balance of his fine but weak intellect, and check the aberrations of his enthusiastic, lofty, but impetuous and at times uncontrollable spirit.

Mr. Sen, however, seems to have breathed freely when the secession was over. Left perfectly un-

shackled, he eagerly commenced the task of realizing his great idea of a New Dispensation, clustering around him as its central personality. The idea of such an economy he had disclosed, as has been more than once shown, in his famous lecture on "Great Men ;" but the presence and disagreeable operation of a counter-acting and controlling element had not only checked its development, but led to its being thrown into the background. But now the long-sought opportunity was afforded, not only of giving it due prominence, but of making it the vital element of his organization. He began the work at once, though the flag of the New Dispensation was not formally hoisted up till about a couple of years afterward.

Our inquiries with reference to the New Dispensation of Babu Keshub Chunder Sen may be presented in a series of searching questions. 1. What is the New Dispensation ? 2. How is it related to Mr. Sen, its author ? 3. What is its object ? 4. What its creed ? 5. And what the rites and ceremonies associated with it ? These questions we shall try to answer one after another categorically, as they occur, taking care to verify our assertions by documentary evidence, such as we find arrayed in a masterly manner in Pudit Siva Nath Sastri's pamphlet, already alluded to.

1. What is the New Dispensation ? A Dispensation, according to Mr. Sen, is an embodiment in a person, rather than in a creed, of special knowledge and guidance vouchsafed by the Almighty to meet a pressing moral emergency. In the history of the world in general, and of different nations in particular, seasons of moral upheaving appear, demanding extraordinary remedial measures or revolutionary changes. At such times special manifestations of God are needed to stem



the rolling tide of corruption and bring in the era of godliness and piety already foreshadowed by prevailing restlessness, in conjunction with undefined yearnings after a better state of things. Such manifestations are granted when demanded by such emergencies, and each of them, embodied in or revolving round a "Great Man" or Prophet raised up, is a New Dispensation. Mr. Sen in his lecture on "Great Men" says: "Great men appear when they are needed. In the history of nations there occur now and then crises of a very serious character, when the advancing tide of progress shakes the very foundations of society; at such times certain great minds appear, being called forth by the peculiar necessities of the age, who avert impending perils, meet all existing wants, and remodel society on an improved basis." With reference to these "great men," Mr. Sen in the same lecture says: "In the established economy of providence there are special dispensations to meet the pressing wants of humanity."

The *Sunday Mirror*, Mr. Sen's own organ, speaks in the same strain: "We believe that at special times and under special circumstances, when the world does need a revival or upheaving, and men do require the guidance of God, a special manifestation of His will takes place, and events happen which have a necessary connection, and may be interpreted as the workings of divine Providence." (*Sunday Mirror*, November 16, 1879.) "When men are hopelessly gone in the way to misery and ruin, when a thick gloom of sin settles upon society, when human eyesight is unable to discern the right path, it is then that Providence sends to the world one of those men whose life has been sold to His Almighty will." (April 10, 1881.) A New Dispensation then is special knowledge of religion communi-



cated through, or rather concentrated in, a "great man" sent with a special commission to wind up an old and usher in a new state of things. The New Dispensation brought in by Mr. Sen is obviously demanded by the moral condition of the world. True religion is extinct, and creeds mutually exclusive and conflicting reign in its place. The self-constituted champions of faith are wasting their energy in an unceasing internecine warfare, and party strife is becoming fearfully prevalent. Amid the din and turmoil of theological controversies the first principles of right practice are forgotten, and charity is cast overboard. Scepticism in theory and immorality in practice are by the law of reaction being brought about by the narrow-mindedness and bigotry associated with religion. Darkness overspreads the world, and thick darkness the nations. At a time of such general degeneracy, what is needed but a New Dispensation, a flood of heavenly light flowing into the world through the illuminated mind of a great man? Has the flag of the New Dispensation been hoisted a moment too soon?

2. How is the New Dispensation related to Mr. Sen? Is he the centre of it, the Great Man in whom it is embodied or concentrated? Mr. Sen does not assume such an attitude in plain, unequivocal terms, but he does so in a roundabout way. Mr. Sen places his Dispensation in the same category with the foregoing Dispensations. In his lecture on "We, Apostles of the New Dispensation," he thus indicates its position: "I say it stands upon the same level with the Jewish Dispensation, the Christian Dispensation, and the Vaishnava Dispensation through Chaitanya." Some of Mr. Sen's utterances are fitted to give it a higher place, but on this point we need not insist here. It is enough for

our argument that Mr. Sen places his Dispensation on a par with foregoing ones without the slightest equivocation. But he does not with equal emphasis place himself on a par with the great founders of these successive economies—with Moses, and Christ, and Mohammed, and Chaitanya. He, however, does so very adroitly under color of such humility as might shield him from the unpleasant consequences of an open assumption of prophetic authority and functions.

Mr. Sen peremptorily refuses, both in his lecture “Am I an Inspired Prophet?” and in that on “We, Apostles of the New Dispensation,” to place himself on a par with prophets like Moses and Christ. In the latter he distinctly says: “If Christ was the centre of His Dispensation, am I not the centre of this?” “Ungenerous and untruthful critics have insinuated that, as Jesus claimed to be the King of the Jews, for which offence His enemies crucified Him, so am I ambitious of being honored as the King of the Indians, of the Bengalis, at any rate. Ah, it is certainly not fair or kind of our critics to say so. Shall a sinner vie with Christ for honors? God forbid. Jesus was born a saint, and I a great sinner.” In this passage Mr. Sen ignores the point at issue, viz., whether he does not, notwithstanding his admitted inferiority to Christ, represent himself as the centre of a New Dispensation? In his lecture on “Am I an Inspired Prophet?” while emphatically renouncing all claim to prophetic honor, he calls himself “a singular man.” “If I am not a prophet,” he says, “I am a singular man. I am not as ordinary men are, and I say this deliberately.” Now in what does his singularity, the uniqueness of his position, consist? In his being the head of a New Dispensation, the medium of communication between

heaven and earth, the spokesman of God. Hear what he says of his doings and sayings in the same lecture : " But men have said that I have been guided by my own imagination, reason, and intellect. Under this conviction they have from time to time protested against my proceedings. They should remember that to protest against the cause I uphold is to protest against the Dispensation of God Almighty." " In doing this work (the work of God) I am confident I have not done anything that is wrong. Surely I am not to blame for anything which I may have done under Heaven's injunction. If any one is to blame, the Lord God of Heaven is to blame for having taught me and constrained me."

The little hesitation he shows in calling himself a prophet is so obviously inconsistent with the attitude he assumes, that his bosom friends and followers never sympathize in it. They publicly proclaim him a prophet, the Heaven-honored centre of his own Dispensation. Hear what the *Sunday Mirror* says (November 16, 1873) : " The minister (Mr. Sen) is, as we believe him to be, a part, a great part, a central part of the Dispensation. It is he who has given life and tone to the entire movement ; and he is completely identified with it ; his preaching and precepts we accept as the embodiment of the Dispensation itself. Thus then we cannot do without this man, who is the leader, the mouthpiece, the heaven-appointed missionary of what we call the Brahmo Somaj." The following dialogue between God and the New Dispensationists, reported in the *Sunday Mirror* of December 7, 1879, sets forth the ground on which they rest his claim to such dignity :

“ Q. We desire to know thy intention clearly and fully regarding our relations to our minister ?

“ A. There is no minister appointed but by Me. Leaders of congregations are ordained by Me. Therefore, treat your minister as one who hath commission from Heaven. His words ye must hear with faith and cherish with reverence.

“ Q. Has he no errors ? . . .

“ A. With his unofficial position Heaven has nothing to do. If he is a bad man at home, unprincipled, selfish, ambitious, angry, deceitful, jealous, untruthful, you will not surely imitate his vices, etc., etc.

“ Q. How shall we then honor him ? If we freely criticise his opinions and doings, and condemn whatever is wrong in his tastes and ideas and deeds, we must treat him as we treat other people, as our equals and inferiors, praising the good and censuring the evil in them ?

“ A. As one of you while at home, but not when in his office. His official position is different. When he ministers to your spiritual wants and offers his prayers and directs his missionary movements, and otherwise renders services for your spiritual improvement, then bow to him as your minister, and let the whole congregation adopt and follow his teachings.

“ Q. In what things are we to take lessons from him ?

“ A. In all matters appertaining to the development and success of the present dispensation, etc.

“ Q. So be it. But even in questions like these, shall we follow blindly where we cannot comprehend ?

“ A. Not blindly, but faithfully, hoping and believing that I will in the fulness of time make all things plain and clear to you. No man can fully explain the deep truths of the spirit-world unless the Holy Spirit reveals them to each individual. Therefore believe, and I will add to your faith knowledge.

“ Q. One question more, O Lord. If some one think him mistaken in these important matters connected with his official position, shall we not try to convince him of his errors and dissuade him from his path ?

“ A. It may be you are mistaken, not he, in those particular instances. Therefore by your remonstrances you may run the risk of tempting your minister to disobey Me and transgress My will,” etc., etc.

No one can read this without being reminded of the

well-known doctrine of papal infallibility, which, if the Pope had professed to have derived it from heaven direct, could not have been expressed in terms more emphatic. Do not men, who pretend to hold such conversation with God and at the same time laugh at supernatural or miraculous modes of communication between heaven and earth, strain out a gnat and swallow a camel ?

In 1879 the Brahmo creed was embodied in thirty-nine articles, in imitation doubtless of the arrangement in the Prayer Book of the Anglican Church. The twenty-fifth article runs thus : “ I believe in the inspiration and truth-teaching power of some of the leaders of the Brahmo Somaj, and eminently of Keshub Chunder Sen. Some of the most cherished and glorious truths respecting the nature of God and man we have learned from him, and from them. But I do not believe that any Brahmo teacher is or has been infallibly inspired, or that any one of them has, at all times and in equal measure, commanded the gift of inspiration.” (The *Theistic Quarterly Review* for July, 1879.) This passage presents a confusion of ideas not unfrequently met with in Brahmo writing. The Brahmo teachers are inspired, and yet not infallibly inspired ! If they are inspired by God, they cannot but be infallibly inspired ; and therefore, if they are not infallibly inspired, their inspiration comes from some other source. The article, however, makes it plain that, instead of a solitary prophet inculcating truth in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, we have around the standard of Brahmoism a number of minor lights thoroughly eclipsed by one central sun ! We are anxious to inquire what “ cherished and glorious truths” our Brahmo friends have learned from this new



school of prophets over and above the legacy of divine knowledge left behind them by their predecessors.

Mr. Sen's dogma of inspiration avowedly, if not really, excludes supernaturalism. A pamphlet on the "Brahmic Doctrine of Inspiration" was published with the imprimatur of the Somaj, immediately after the disruption. The writer, Babu Durgadass Ray, thus speaks of Brahmo inspiration : "Inspiration with a Brahmo means not 'an infusion of supernatural ideas,' as old Dr. Johnson and his school of thinkers would have it, but the perception of the divine hand in everything *natural*" (p. 15). Mr. Ray does not pause to inquire how comes the perception, possessed by a few solitary persons in different ages and different countries, and possessed by Mr. Sen in our own times in a higher degree than by any other person. But he enters upon a long, if not learned, disquisition to prove the very dangerous position embodied in the following sentence : "If we believe in inspiration, we must also believe it to be quite independent of morality, or rather the so-called ethical code of the moralist." From what he says, under this head, it is plain that inspiration should be our guide even if it contravened the plain teaching of precedent revelation or conscience. It is not our intention to call the principle in question, our desire being simply to inquire how inspiration under the circumstances is verified or proved. External evidence, such as the prophets of Judea and Christ Himself offered in attestation of their divine commission—evidence embodied in miracles of wisdom and miracles of power—is out of the question ; and internal evidence, the approval of conscience or harmony with existing revelation, is also abandoned. All proof then is done away with, and inspiration has as little evidence as a whim or a chimera.



3. What is the object of the New Dispensation ? To reconcile all existing dispensations to one another, and gather them into one focus. Read the following extracts from Mr. Sen's lecture on " We, Apostles of the New Dispensation : "

" Come then to the synthetic unity of the New Dispensation. You will see how all other dispensations are harmonized and unified in this, a whole host of churches resolved into a scientific unity. In the midst of the multiplicity of dispensations in the world, there is indubitably a concealed unity, and it is of the highest importance to us all that we should discover it with the light of logic and science. . . . All these dispensations are connected with each other in the economy of Providence. They are connected in one continuous chain which may be traced to the earliest age. They are a concatenated series of ideas, and when rationally apprehended, they show a systematic evolution of thought, a development of religious life. Popular opinion on this subject has always run in a different line. Men have not seen, and therefore they have ignored and denied the connecting link between the several dispensations. . . . The New Dispensation has discovered the missing link. It has found the secret thread which goes through these dispensations, and keeps them together. Where others see only confusion and anomaly, it sees order and continuity. Joyfully it exclaims, ' I have found the science of dispensation at last, unity in multiplicity. ' "

Now what do these smooth periods mean ? Do they mean that each of the religions of the world has some particles of truth, and that a religion presenting in one focus all its sporadic elements scattered in the religious literature of the world is destined to supersede all ? If such is Mr. Sen's meaning, he must prove his ability to discriminate between truth and falsehood with unerring certainty, and build up a system of religion unmixed with error before anything like a general rush toward his dispensation can be realized in this world. Again, do these statements mean that beneath masses of conflicting elements presented by the religions of the world there are certain underlying doctrines by which they

may be unified ? If so, Mr. Sen must separate these, and show that nothing more is needed to save men from sin and uncleanness. But Mr. Sen's meaning is strange, if the following quotation from the *Sunday Mirror* is made our guide :

“ Our position is not that truths are to be found in all religions, but that all the established religions of the world are true. There is a great deal of difference between the two assertions. The glorious mission of the New Dispensation is to harmonize all religions and revelations, establish the truth of every particular dispensation, and upon the basis of these particulars to establish the largest and broadest induction of a general and glorious proposition.”

This is a reaffirmation in “ glorious ” language of the current notion of our countrymen, that all the religions of the world are true.

Let Mr. Sen perform the Herculean task of proving the truth of each of the innumerable forms of faith, rising in an ascending scale from gross fetichism to refined monotheism, and attempting their reconciliation. And if he succeed, he will effect a greater revolution in the sphere of human thought than has yet been accomplished by the well-known champions of the science of religion from whose writings he has derived his inspiration. The fact that he contents himself with only showing coherence and consistency in the teachings of Moses, Christ, and Paul, and dexterously leaves the larger task of reconciling all the religious books of the world in the cold, may be looked upon as a confession of inability.

4. Now let us come to the Creed of the Dispensation. Let it be observed that nothing in connection with the notoriously inconstant Brahmoism is so changeable as its creed. Who can state the number of the creeds which have appeared and disappeared in rapid

succession in connection with the Somaj during the short period of its existence ? The New Dispensation is not a lustrum old, and yet two formal creeds and several informal ones have emanated from it. The Thirty-nine Articles published in 1879 shrivelled in 1881 into the following brief creed :

1. One God, one Scripture, one Church.
2. Eternal Progress of the Soul.
3. Communion of Prophets and Saints.
4. Fatherhood and Motherhood of God, Brotherhood of man, and Sisterhood of woman.
5. Harmony of Knowledge and Holiness, Love and Work, Yoga and Asceticism, in their highest development.
6. Loyalty to Sovereign.

It is not necessary to take formal notice of each of these articles of faith. Two of them, the third and fourth, need some explanation, having been proclaimed with a flourish of trumpets, and with not a few elements of the ludicrous attached to them.

Mr. Sen in his lecture "We, Apostles of the New Dispensation," thus explains the Communion of Prophets and Saints : " You have no doubt heard of such a thing as Communion of Saints. What is it ? Is it the superficial doctrine of objectivity or is it the deeper philosophy ? . . . The Christ of older theologies is a barren outward fact, the dead Christ of history and dogma. But the Christ of the New Dispensation is an indwelling power, a living spirit, a fact of consciousness. It is this philosophy of the subjectivity which underlies the Pilgrimages of Saints as they are called. . . . As pilgrims we approach the great Saints, and commune with them in spirit. We kill the distance of time and space. We enter into them, and they into us.

In our souls we cherish them, imbibe their character and principles." Mr. Sen's ideal Christ appears here at the head of his ideal school of prophets, including representatives from one and all the religions of the world, from the great teachers of primitive fetichism down to Swedenborg, who gave utterance to a similar idea, and from whose writings, presented to him in England, Mr. Sen has derived much of the inspiration which has surrounded his creed with a halo of mysticism.

The doctrine thus elucidated did not remain a dead letter. It was reduced to practice in right earnest, and whole weeks were set apart for such holy communion—one for communion with Socrates, one with Moses, one with Mohammed, and so on. Each of these weeks was followed by a Sunday of special consecration, when "a room in Calcutta (Mr. Sen's house) was transformed into an historical site in Palestine, Greece, Arabia, Northern India ; conversation was carried on with the prophet invoked, lessons were taught and learned, and a vivid imagination brought the historical person before the assembly, and his utterances of centuries ago were applied more or less skilfully to the exigencies of the present time, or the difficulties of existing theological speculation." This is an edition somewhat improved, of a well-known practice of Comtists, and is perhaps adopted to prove that in the New Dispensation a glorious reconciliation is effected between agnosticism and atheism on the one side and pure theism on the other.

The doctrine of the Motherhood of God was proclaimed with great *éclat*, and might be looked at as a bid for popularity among the worshippers of Durga and Kali. Processions heralded by flags with the word "Mother" inscribed on them, and enlivened by songs

in which the word "Mother" occupied the most prominent place ; and "missionary expeditions" into places far and near, were the means utilized in giving publicity to a doctrine, which, though stale, was paraded as if it were a grand discovery of the Somaj. But the most remarkable thing in connection with this phasis of Brahma development was a public proclamation said to have been issued by God Himself as "India's Mother." This precious document is quoted by Mr. Sastri, with some omission, from Miss Collet's Brahma Year Book for 1880. It runs as follows :

*" Proclamation.*

" To All my Soldiers in India.

" My affectionate greetings to all. Accept this Proclamation. Believe that it goeth forth from Heaven, in the name and with the love of your Mother, and carry out its behests like loyal soldiers and devoted children.

" Ye are my soldiers, my covenanted soldiers. Ye are bound to fight valiantly and faithfully under my banner, and no other God shall ye serve. I will give you victory, and glory eternal shall be yours. I have chosen India to show unto all nations the workings of my special providence in accomplishing national redemption. The British Government is my government, and the Brahma Somaj is my Church. . . . My daughter, Queen Victoria, have I ordained and set over the country to rule its people, and give them education, material comfort, and protect their wealth and property. . . . Be loyal to her, for the warrant of her appointment bears my signature. . . . Love her and honor her as my servant and representative, and give her your loyal support and co-operation, so that she may carry out my purposes unhindered, and give India political and material prosperity. . . . Tell all the people to come direct to me, without a mediator or intercessor, and accept me as their Mother. The influence of the earthly mother at home and of the Queen-mother at the head of the Government will raise the hearts of my Indian children to the Supreme Mother, and I will gather them in the kingdom of heaven, and give them peace and salvation. Soldiers, fight bravely and establish my dominion.

[Signed.]

" INDIA'S MOTHER."



Miss Collet, once a great admirer of Mr. Sen, calls this "an undisguised piece of blasphemy." Mr. Sen's political utterances are behind the age, and it is to be hoped that their object is not to enable him to be in good odor with the authorities.

5. Let us conclude our sketch of the New Dispensation with delineations of the most prominent of its rites and ceremonies in the words, as far as possible, of its champions rather than in our own.

a. The most prominent place among these must be given to the Flag Ceremony. Here is the account given in the *Sunday Mirror* of January 30, 1881 : "Every faithful Brahmo and member of the New Dispensation was exhorted to vow his allegiance to this banner of regenerated and saving Theism. Accordingly, on the evening of the annual festival held on Sunday last, the prominent object noticed by the Congregation was a handsome silk banner, mounted upon a silver pole, fixed on the open space of marble pavement in front of the pulpit. After the *sankirtan* (singing) at sunset, began the ceremony announced before of unfurling the flag of the New Dispensation. A new form of evening worship called *arati* was gone through. . . . The worshippers held each a lighted candle in his hand, creating a brilliant and picturesque effect. Dozens of musical instruments, from the English bugle and gong to the traditional conch-shell, were loudly and simultaneously performed upon. The varied and deepening peals issuing from these instruments, combined with the voices of scores of men, who stood up and went round in circles with burning tapers in their hands, heartily chanting the *arati* hymn, produced upon the immense crowd present an effect which must be felt to be described." It is not necessary to say that the words



“dozens,” “scores,” and “immense” in this extract are hyperbolic, and bear the same relation to realities which the word “India,” when used by Mr. Sen, bears to the half dozen men to whom he gives that pompous name. It is however necessary to say that a *chamar* was, according to Mr. Sastri, waved by Mr. Sen before the banner “in the orthodox idolatrous fashion.” It was moreover devoutly kissed by Mr. Sen and touched and bowed to by his followers.

b. The ceremony of the Eucharist was performed on the 6th of March, 1881. The following account appeared in the *New Dispensation*, the paper started and edited by Mr. Sen about the time when the flag ceremony was performed :

“On Sunday, the 6th of March, the ceremony of adapting the Sacrament to Hindu life was performed with due solemnity, in accordance with the principles above set forth. The Hindu Apostles of Christ, gathered after prayer in the dinner hall, sat upon the floor upon bare ground. Upon a silver plate was rice, and in a small goblet was water, and there were flowers and leaves around both. The minister (Mr. Sen) read the following verses from Luke 22.

“‘And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it and gave unto them saying, This is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me.

“‘Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you.’

“A prayer was then offered asking the Lord to bless the sacramental rice and water :

“Touch this rice and this water, O Holy Spirit, and turn their grossly material substance into sanctifying spiritual forces, that they may upon entering our system be assimilated to it as to flesh and blood of all the saints in Christ Jesus. Satisfy the hunger and thirst of our souls with the rich food and drink Thou hast placed before us. Invigorate us with Christ-force, and nourish us with saintly life.

“The Lord blessed the rice, and He blessed the water.

“And these were then served in small quantities to those around, and men ate and drank reverently, and women and children also ate and drank, and they blessed God, the God of prophets and saints.”

c. The Hom ceremony, a bid for popularity among Hindus, was performed in the manner indicated in the following extract from the *New Dispensation* :

“ On Tuesday last the sanctuary (a room in Mr. Sen’s house) witnessed a new and imposing, and, we may add, an instructive spectacle. There was a large iron fire-pan in front of the *vedi* (pulpit) ; in an earthen vessel was *ghee* or clarified butter, bundles of sticks and pieces of firewood were gathered in one place and there was a large metallic spoon. Varieties of beautiful and fragrant flowers and evergreens in abundance formed a semicircle skirting the place where these things were arranged. No one was prepared for such a sight, as none, even among the select few who were present, knew what was going to happen. After the introductory portion of the service was over, the minister invoked divine blessing on the ceremony which was to be performed, and prayed that it might become profitable unto the Church. He then lighted up the pile before him, and pouring over it clarified butter produced a brisk fire, which he thus addressed :

“ ‘ O thou blazing Agni ! Great art thou, great among the forces in creation. We shall honor thee and magnify thee because of thy greatness and majesty. Thou art not God. We do not adore thee. But in thee dwells the Lord, the eternal, inextinguishable Flame, the Light of the Universe, the immanent Fire, the Fire of Fire, whom fire doth reveal and glorify. O thou brilliant Agni, in thee we behold our resplendent Lord,’ and so on.

“ Then followed a prayer to God, after which the minister cast the six pieces of fuel into the burning fire, the congregation exclaiming together, ‘ Victory to God, Victory to God, Victory to God. ’ ”

d. The account of the performance of the ceremony of baptism given in the *New Dispensation* is long, but worthy of reproduction, being fitted to give us an insight into some of the peculiarities of Mr. Sen’s system.

“ After service in the Tabernacle the devotees congregated in the family sanctuary. The minister took his seat on the *vedi*, and offered a short prayer to the following effect :

“ ‘ Eternal Spirit, we, Thy pilgrim servants, desire to go on a pilgrimage to the Jordan, in the Holy Land, for our redemption’s sake. We desire to be where, eighteen centuries ago, Jesus, Thy son, was

baptized. Gratify, thou, our heart's longing, and guide us and cheer us in our pilgrimage.'

"The devotees then formed a procession, and solemnly moved on, singing a hymn with the accompaniment of the *Mridang*, the conch-shell and cymbals, till they reached the bathing *ghaut* of the *Komala Sarabar*, the tank attached to the sanctuary. The place had been decorated with flowers and evergreens, and the flag of the New Dispensation was waving in the breeze. The devotees took their seat upon the steps of the *ghaut*; the minister sat upon a piece of tiger-skin, stretched upon a wooden *vedi* erected for the occasion. Deep silence prevailed. It was midday, the torrid sun burning overhead, when the minister addressed his people as follows :

" 'Beloved brethren, we have come into the land of the Jews, and we are seated on the bank of the Jordan. Let them that have eyes see. Verily, verily, here was the Lord Jesus baptized eighteen hundred years ago. Behold the holy waters, wherein was the Son of God immersed. See ye where the blessed Jesus and by his side John the Baptist, administering the rite of baptism, and behold in the sky above the descent of the Holy Ghost. All three are here present — Father, Son, Holy Spirit — spiritually united. Pilgrim brothers, mark their union to-day on this hallowed spot, and see how the water shineth in celestial radiance.'

" 'O thou Great Varuna, Water of Life.

" 'Sacred Water, mighty expanse of Seas and Oceans and Rivers, we glorify thee. Thou art not God, but the Lord is in thee. Thou art full of the beauty and glory of heaven ; each drop revealeth the divine face. Thou art the Water of Life. A most helpful friend art thou unto us.' . . .

"The minister then read the whole of Matthew, chapter iii. . . . He explained the true secret of baptism thus :

" 'Why did Jesus plunge into the water of the river ? Because He saw the water was full of God. The Omnipresent Spirit of God he saw moving upon the face of the waters, and in every drop sparkled divinity. In such holy water, in the Jordan of divine life, was Jesus immersed. And as he dipped into Divinity, and straightway came out of the water, full of new or divine life, and the Holy Spirit overhead announced his acceptance by God as His 'Beloved Son.' Thus in him was the Father glorified, and likewise the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Behold, my brethren, the water before us is full of the Lord, and blessed are they who are baptized in it as was Jesus of Nazareth.'

"The minister anointed himself with flower-oil and went down

into the water. Standing with his head above the water and reverently looking above, he thus prayed : ‘ May I behold Thy bright and sweet face, O God, my Father, in the water that encompasses me ! Convert this water into the water of grace and holiness that I may be immersed in life everlasting. May Thy beloved Son abide in my soul ! May John the Baptist be here to administer unto me the sacred rite, and may Thy Holy Spirit hover over my head and inspire me ! ’

“ Thus saying he thrice immersed himself, saying, ‘ Glory unto the Father, glory unto the Son, glory unto the Holy Ghost.’ To magnify the Three-in-one, he dipped once more, saying, ‘ Blessed be Sacchitananda, Truth, Wisdom, and Joy in One.’ ”

“ With the water he washed his eyes and ears, his hands and feet, and prayed with clasped hands.”

With reference to these rites we have a remark or two to make. They are in the first place caricatures and burlesques, and their result is the universal derision in which the *New Dispensation* is held by our educated countrymen in general. They moreover indicate a policy not only flexible and compromising, but positively suicidal. Their object is to please everybody, but their result is—nobody is pleased ! To reconcile, not merely the doctrines embodied in the varied religions of the world, but the forms and symbols of worship associated with them, is the avowed object of the new movement, but the result of such indiscriminating syncretism is, as it always has been, “ confusion worse confounded.” It is worthy of special notice that there was an attempt made in the manner in which these rites were performed to rationalize and justify the primitive beliefs of the country, the well-known tendency in Vedic times to worship the elements and *annam* or rice, etc. The sages of ancient India took special delight in calling water Brahma, fire Brahma, rice Brahma, and almost every conceivable thing Brahma, and Mr. Sen in praising these natural objects as full of

Divinity not merely effected a reconciliation of heterogeneous symbols of worship, but attempted in a very effective manner to demonstrate the truth of the forms of faith that prevailed in the country when the grand old hymns of the Rig Veda were chanted on the banks of the Indus. An attempt was made by a single stroke of policy to reconcile the Hindus and Christians ; and it is only obtuseness on the part of the parties thus favored that leads them peremptorily (not to make use of the word indignantly) to repel his advances. It is also to be remembered that only a very small number of persons, about a dozen and a half, including boys, went all lengths with Mr. Sen in these demonstrations, and that the present moribund condition of the new movement is mainly attributable to them. A statement made the other day in a newspaper, viz., that Mr. Sen has in all India no more than fifty-three disciples, may be a little below the mark, but there are not more than a hundred persons in all India who have accepted all the vagaries of the New Dispensation, and who may justly be called Babu Keshub Chunder Sen's followers ! And the bulk of these are evidently not intelligent and thoughtful men ; as, if they had been such, they would have taken part in that reasonable rebellion (against the most obviously irrational principles promulgated by Mr. Sen) under the banner of rationalism, which is embodied in the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj.

NOTE ON THE TRINITY.—Mr. Sen, bent on pleasing all parties, has been, in his treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity, a little more politic than Rajah Ram Mohun Roy, who could not conceal his antipathy to it. In his lecture on “That Marvellous Mystery, the Trinity,” he tries to reconcile Hinduism with Christianity by reviving the triad of Vedantism embodied in the well-known word *Sacchitananda*, and squeezing it into a sort of verbal if not real ac-



cordance with our views of the holy mystery. He forgets that, according to Vedantism, Brahma is improperly called by that name, inasmuch as he is *sat*, existence, not "Truth," as Mr. Sen translates wrongly, and nothing more ; his knowledge involving no distinction between subject and object, and his happiness being without *feeling* or consciousness of happiness ! Mr. Sen in speaking of the Trinity employs at times language which a Christian might adopt, but he veers about, as if afraid of losing thereby the sympathy of the large class of Unitarians from whose writings he has often derived his inspiration. He seems to adopt finally, if any sentiment in his Proteus-like system can be called a finality, what theologians call the *modal* view of the doctrine in question. Hear what he says : " You have three conditions, three manifestations of divinity. Yet there is one God, one substance amid these phenomena. Not three gods, but one God. Whether alone, or manifest in the Son, or quickening humanity as the Holy Spirit, it is the same God, the same identical deity, whose unity continues divisible amid multiplicity of manifestations." Again : " But remember the Trinity is not three persons, but *three functions* of the same Person." Mr. Sen descants upon this old theory, in his rambling but by no means unattractive way, as if it were a discovery of his own. Nay, he goes so far as to affirm that this view, so often upheld and so often exploded in the church, has been revealed to his " God-consciousness," and that of hundreds of men in Calcutta, as a new feature of his novel Dispensation !



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE NEW DISPENSATION CONTINUED.

THE leading spirit of the New Dispensation has passed away since the foregoing papers were written. Babu Keshub Chunder Sen's premature death was regarded as a public calamity by all classes of people in India, the ruling and the ruled. Meetings were held in almost all its great cities to give suitable expression to the sense of loss and the profound grief with which the disappearance, though not unexpected, of a great and good man from the stage of public life could not but be regarded. A grand meeting was held in the Calcutta Town Hall, not only in honor of his memory, but with the avowed object of raising funds and doing something handsome to perpetuate it among his sorrowing countrymen. Several of the papers edited by native gentlemen appeared with black borders and commendatory notices of his labors, and all Indian journals, both European and native, united in bearing collective testimony to the extraordinary ability and goodness of the Reformer, who, if a mausoleum like the Westminster Abbey had existed in the country, could not but have been enshrined among its illustrious dead in a prominent, if not the most prominent, niche. His disciples went into mourning for a stated number of days, and they were directed by proclamation to spend these in intense meditation on God as the Mother of the world with the beloved child, Keshub Chunder, in Her arms.

The highest place was accorded to him among the living, and the highest among the dead. In the first gush of feeling it was impossible to form a proper estimate of the character and career of a man who, in spite of temporary fluctuations, occupied a very high place in public regard ; but now that the universal and vehement sorrow has subsided, a calm review of his life and the individuality which runs like a vein of gold through it is possible.

The illustrious lecturer, Joseph Cook, represented the Indian Reformer, on his return from his voyage round the world, as a man of a religious genius. This phrase is, we beg to affirm, with due deference to him, both unhappy and ambiguous. Genius implies not merely an extraordinary power of recombination or reconstruction, but the power of discovery and invention. But discovery in religion is an impossibility. That man cannot by reason search out God is an axiom of Christian philosophy, and the difference between the religions of the world and Christianity is that, while they embody or represent a series of fruitless efforts on the part of man to find God, Christianity points to a series of loving efforts on the part of God to enlighten and save man. God must bring Himself down to the level of human comprehension, either by visions and revelations, or by providential dealings of a miraculous nature, or by theophanies and incarnations, or knowledge of God no amount of genius on the part of man can enable him to attain. Genius again is often used as convertible with creative power ; but in the region of religious truth creation is even a wilder and more hopeless effort than discovery. Again, if by genius is meant an instinctive perception of truth, how can a man, who, with the New Testament open before him,

wandered very far away from the vital truths of Christianity, be represented as especially gifted with it ?

But perhaps Mr. Cook means by the phrase nothing more than a religious temperament. That he was characterized from his youth by a strong and irresistible proclivity to a religious life is undeniable. In this respect he was, when very young, separated by a broad line of demarcation from the youth of his country. While they manifested a lamentable proneness to frivolity and even viciousness, he chose the better part, and earnestly endeavored to initiate among them a reform which their condition and that of the whole land peremptorily demanded. To universal apathy to the concerns of religion he opposed a singularly grand earnestness ; and the zeal with which he held meetings and delivered lectures for the benefit of those whose heedless progress toward destruction he deplored cannot be sufficiently praised. But his religious temperament was unhappily not guided by a sound judgment and a well-balanced intellect. In one respect his intellect was doubtless of a very high order. He had a resplendent imagination—an imagination that could not merely present ordinary thoughts in an attractive garb, but infuse warmth and vitality into the coldest of ideas and the wildest of theories. An abstraction ceased to be cold and unattractive the moment it passed through the blazing furnace of his mind, and even a vagary received from it a fascination which truth with its innate charms seems to lack when passing through the cold intellect of a man prone to philosophize but destitute of poetic fervor. But his brilliant imagination was at once his strength and his weakness. It checked the proper development of the other faculties of his mind, suppressed his reason and judgment, and ultimately led to his

being victimized by vagaries and chimeras of the wildest stamp.

As an orator he was certainly without a rival in his own country, and without many in the world. His style was attractive if not chaste ; his utterances were impassioned and fervid ; and the tropes and metaphors in which he indulged, though obviously incompatible with the approved rules of rhetoric, exercised a weird influence over audiences neither very intelligent nor very appreciative. His discourses, however, lacked the most prominent elements of genuine eloquence—directness of purpose, coherence of thought, and accuracy of reasoning ; and they were, moreover, marred by an egotism which, in spite of his oft-repeated confessions of sin and unworthiness, could not but be extremely repulsive. A greater mistake could not be made by a human being than what led some of his admirers to place him as an orator on a par with Gladstone and Bright. Barring such excellences as the classical purity of their style, the breadth of their scholarship, and the range of their thought, there is a gulf impassable between what may be called the structure of their minds and that of his. His mind, on the whole, was weak, theirs is strong. His intellect was ill-regulated, ill-balanced, with one faculty disproportionately developed, and others scarcely unfolded if not thoroughly enslaved. The intellect of these really great men is on the whole harmoniously developed, each faculty properly cultivated and thereby fitted to contribute its quota to the wealth and grandeur of the whole. He was thoroughly incapable of doing what they are daily doing. He could not take up a subject, sit down and master the body of literature associated with it, study details, analyze figures, examine all sides, carefully

weigh the *pros* and *cons*, and calmly deduce the conclusions borne out by facts and statistics. The process of reasoning he followed is the antipodes of that followed by these great statesmen and orators. His was the deductive, while theirs has always been the inductive method of reasoning. Sensible men do by no means sympathize in the contempt poured upon the deductive process by John Stuart Mill. When the general principles from which particular conclusions are deduced are sound, and the intervening process is without a flaw, the reasoning cannot but be pronounced unexceptionable, and its results classed among the facts proven. But when general principles are heedlessly postulated, and some of the intervening steps skipped over, the conclusions arrived at cannot but be fallacious, and therefore unworthy of acceptance. While men like Gladstone study facts and details and rise through the varied steps of an accurate process of reasoning from particulars to generals, he was plunged into the abyss of error by generalizations, gorgeous indeed, but hastily assumed, and obstinately maintained in the teeth of facts substantiated and deductions sustained by the approved canons of correct reasoning.

To give an example or two : Mr. Sen believed, and was never tired of expressing the conviction in his fervid style, that the sages of ancient India, especially of the age of the Upanishads, professed and elaborated a sublime form of Theism—the form, in short, which it was his work to revive and promulgate afresh. Upon what was this belief on his part based ? Not on historical or documentary evidence. The Vedas unfold a system of polytheism as complicated as that which curses our country to-day, and by no means so much less degraded as is generally represented by sentimen-



talists. The earliest and the purest of them, the Rig Veda, develops in its heart-stirring hymns a form of nature-worship which even Max Müller discriminates from monotheism by such terms as Kathenotheism or Henotheism—terms which, if they mean anything at all, indicate a system of polytheism of a refined type. And as to sublimity of thought and purity of practice, another great scholar, Monier Williams, sees in this Veda, along with some sporadic jewels of truth, “precepts implying a social condition scarcely compatible with the lowest grade of culture and civilization.” Again, the teaching of the Upanishads may be justly represented as vibrating in its earlier stages between nihilism and pantheism, and ultimately settling down into the latter form of what may be called transcendental materialism or atheism. Neither the earlier nor the later portions of the Vedas present the slightest indication of an era of theistic belief or theistic devotion. Mr. Sen saw such an age of pure faith and practice through the lenses of his brilliant imagination, and drew even a broader conclusion from it—viz., that a sublime type of theism, elaborated by human reason with the help of such inspiration as is common to religious teachers, philosophers, and poets, was the primitive faith of every nation on the surface of the globe. And after having allowed himself to be victimized by a generalization, gorgeous though false, he had no alternative but to set himself to the task of misconstruing texts and distorting facts.

Mr. Sen formed a theory of the Person of Christ and His work essentially different from what has been received as orthodox in the Church from its foundation in the days of the apostles down to the present moment. How did he form it? Not certainly by care-



fully studying and analyzing the received theology of the Church with its standards and symbols ; not even by a calm study of the Bible and an analysis of the almost innumerable texts referring to the subject ; but by hastily snatching a sentiment from one school of ancient philosophers, another from heretical writings, a third from the tomes of mysticism, and a fourth from the speculations of rationalism. This composite theory was matured in Mr. Sen's fertile mind ; it appeared in glowing colors in his public utterances, and it had to be upheld as the primitive faith of the Church buried under its dogmatic lore, and disinterred by him. And texts were misconstrued and facts distorted with an audacity which, but for the example set by Paulus, Schenkel, and Strauss, would be pronounced unparalleled. He himself confessed, in one of his Town Hall lectures, that he was not in the habit of reading, and that all the truths he proclaimed regarding bygone ages and historical characters were communicated to him by a series of direct but not supernatural inspirations. And he was right, if by inspirations we understand the ebullitions of a fervid but ill-regulated imagination.

Again, while the minds of these statesmen are of a practical order and averse to Quixotic schemes and projects, Mr. Sen was a visionary and a dreamer. The idea of a religious syncretism, which had assumed a vivid form in the mind of Rajah Ram Mohun Roy, became in him a deep conviction and an all-absorbing passion. By him it was not merely entertained amid sanguine hopes of immediate realization, but expanded to an obviously preposterous extent. He not merely believed in the existence of sporadic elements of truth in one and all the religions of the world, and in the possibility of their being brought into one focus, and

thus made to constitute one comprehensive scheme of faith and practice ; but he maintained that they were *all* true, and that all that was needed to effect their unification was the discovery of what he was pleased to call a string of union. Every religion, from fetichism up to pure monotheism, represents, according to his belief, a dispensation of God ; and consequently a union of all the conflicting systems of belief is not merely a possibility, but sure to be a realized certainty under the banner of the New Dispensation. An idea more wild could scarcely be entertained by a human mind, and the bare fact that he allowed it to be the master passion of his soul is a proof of an ill-regulated and ill-balanced intellect. Had he studied history and weighed calmly the results of the syncretistic efforts put forth by men greater than himself, the philosophical and theosophical union attempted by Ammonius Saccas and others in the West, and by the authors of Swetaswatara Upanishad and Bhagavada Gita in the East, the theological syncretism attempted in modern Germany, his sanguine hopes would have given place to cold despair. But he was averse to reading and calm thought, and prone to allow his brilliant mind to be completely enslaved by visionary schemes and grand but dreamy generalizations.

The impossibility of the “synthesis” Mr. Sen worked hard to realize will become apparent if one of the fundamental principles of the New Dispensation is taken into consideration. That principle is, in Mr. Sen’s phraseology, *immediacy*, or direct intercourse with God, and a denial of the doctrine of mediation. Mr. Sen evidently believed that this doctrine was a non-essential feature of the positive religions of the world—a feature of so little importance that he had only to unfurl the

flag of his Dispensation, with the word *immediacy* inscribed in characters of gold, to effect its immediate extinction. He held to the diverse religions of the world what was pompously represented as the language of peace and amity, but he lacked penetration to see that he was, by a denial of mediation, simply declaring a war of extermination against the systems he wished to reconcile with one another, and with his own theory. Christianity, for instance, could not be called upon to abandon the doctrine of mediation without pouring out its very life-blood ; and the invitation extended to her by the Indian Reformer to give up mediacy and accept immediacy may remind one of the wholesale union proposed when the lamb was invited to make peace with the tiger by lying *in* the bloodthirsty animal !

Mr. Sen, moreover, was not only a visionary but a fanatic of the first water. His imagination predominated over the nobler faculties of his mind so completely that during especially the last few years of his life he believed, and did not hesitate to proclaim, that he was the chosen medium of communication between God, the Father of peace, and the world, so obviously torn and lacerated by theological disputes and ecclesiastical dissensions. His theory of inspiration was at first the natural one, which, for instance, led the disciples of Plato to represent him as " God-enlightened." But it gradually assumed a form which can scarcely be differentiated from that theory of supernatural revelation which forms a prominent feature of Christian orthodoxy. He made use of the old prophetic formula, " thus saith the Lord," with an emphasis from which devotees of natural inspiration would recoil in horror. He issued proclamations and manifestoes in the

name of God, and published dialogues said to have been held between the Creator and His disciples with reference to the claim of infallibility he advanced as the centre of a new dispensation. Nay, he professed to be immediately guided by God, not only in his official capacity, but as a private person ; not only in matters of doctrinal belief and ritualistic practice, but even in those affecting the interests of his domestic life. He traced the marriage of his first daughter to an Indian prince to a direct revelation, as well as his determination to set up the banner of the New Dispensation ! What shall we say with reference to these preposterous pretensions ? Was he sincere, or was he not, in advancing them ? We believe he was sincere, simply because he advanced them with the consciousness that they were fitted to alienate from him the educated community, of which he was a distinguished member, and diminish the respect entertained for him by the most sensible of his foreign friends and supporters. If the theory that he was a pretender cannot under the circumstances be entertained, the conclusion is inevitable that he was a fanatic and a dupe.

That Mr. Sen was a man of unparalleled popularity both among the ruling and the ruled classes is a patent fact ; and the phenomenon can be easily explained. He was a man of extraordinary ability, a born orator, and an earnest social reformer. But these excellences, however commendable, cannot of themselves account for the conspicuous place he occupied in public veneration. To these must be added the circumstance that he very worthily occupied an intermediate position between Christianity and the religions of the country. There are in the official circles in India many so-called Christians and pronounced infidels who believe that the

religion of Christ is after all not suited to the genius of the Hindu people, and that consequently all attempts to propagate it within the boundary lines of their country must end in failure. Nor can these people with open eyes fail to see that the grovelling superstitions prevalent among them cannot maintain their degrading sway in the teeth of the moral forces brought to bear on the country by Western civilization and Western culture. These being doomed, something must be substituted, and Mr. Sen's scheme has appeared to them as the scheme best fitted to check the progress of the one and take the place of the others. To them, therefore, Mr. Sen appeared a champion worthy of support and encouragement, and they lavished their patronage on him. Again, the educated natives long for an intermediate halting stage between the prevalent Hinduism, of which they are thoroughly ashamed, and Christianity, the peculiar doctrines of which they regard with repugnance. They therefore eagerly gathered around the Indian reformer, who not merely supplied the halting-stage they had been in quest of, but flattered their national vanity by professing to have derived the best principles of his new faith from the literature of the country, and discovering an esoteric meaning even in the superstitions they were prone to look upon with disfavor. Mr. Sen's popularity waned during the last few years of his life, in consequence of the vagaries he indulged in, and his following dwindled down to a handful of persons of not very superior education, barring, of course, his own brother and the present unrecognized leader of his movement, Mr. Protap Chunder Mazoomdar, and a man here and there. As an orator and a social reformer he retained his influence intact up to the last moment of his life.



Mr. Sen did not live as an ascetic. He lived amid the attractions and endearments of domestic life, in a commodious and well-furnished house, with a fruitful vine by its sides, olive plants round about his table, numerous relations and friends, and a retinue of retainers and servants. He appeared neatly and respectably dressed, travelled first class, figured away in private parlors and public drawing-rooms, attended vice-regal levees and receptions, introduced his daughters by marriage into the wealthiest of families, married his son to an accomplished lady amid aristocratic pomp, and led, on the whole, the life of a metropolitan magnate rather than that of a religious recluse. He was avowedly a warm advocate of Yoga philosophy, and he at times affected or burlesqued a few of the least painful sacrifices of the life of extraordinary austerity associated with it ; but between his style of living and that of a Yogee properly so called, there is a gulf impassable. Nor was Mr. Sen obviously dead to those imperious calls of secular ambition, the temptations of which men of ability find it so hard to resist. He blew his own trumpet, and never scrupled to raise himself by varieties of means, on the whole fair, to the pinnacle of fame on which he shone alone among his countrymen.

An important question ought to be disposed of before an attempt is made to show how far his standpoint is from that of the Church of Christ. Was Mr. Sen thoroughly sincere ? In the beginning of his career he was doubtless more sincere than he was when crowned with world-wide fame, and blessed with the plenitude of patronage and applause. But it is questionable whether he ever was thoroughly and unreservedly sincere. Had he been so, or had a thorough-paced sincerity been in his case associated with complete self-abnegation, genu-



ine humility, and pure love of truth, he would not have been allowed by a Merciful Father to go so far astray as to believe in his prophetic vocation, and claim to be the heaven-appointed and God-enlightened centre of the last and best of divine dispensations. The extravagances and vagaries in which he indulged, especially during the closing period of his career of reform, are a proof, like those into which Mohammed was betrayed, or by which the founder of Mormonism was victimized, of some degree of insincerity and falsity. Like some great leaders of religious schism and heresy, as well as of wild, infidel factions, he allowed intellectual pride and worldly ambition to mar the degree of sincerity with which he began his career as an inquirer, and the consequence was that he was hurried by a weak judgment and uncontrollable feelings to conceits and chimeras which have rarely been paralleled, never surpassed, even in the history of wild enthusiasm. What a power he would have been if he had been thoroughly sincere in the beginning of his career, and if his extraordinary abilities had been guided by a more genuine love of truth, a calmer intellect, a sounder judgment, and a less domineering individualism !

From Mr. Sen's individuality we now pass on to his creed, if a series of shifting beliefs can be called a creed. And the first question we raise is, What thinks he of Christ ? Does he believe in the Supreme Divinity of Christ in the sense in which the Church in all its sections holds the doctrine as life ? No. His utterances are ambiguous, as his object seems many-sided, to conciliate all classes of people—Christians, infidels, Hindus, and Mussulmans. But if they are thoroughly sifted and analyzed, as they were in a preceding paper, they will be found to constitute an

emphatic denial of this cardinal truth of the Christian scheme. His followers are more outspoken than he was for obvious reasons, and the following extract from a pamphlet recently handed to the writer in the Punjab says distinctly and without equivocation what he says under a cloud of pompous but misleading phraseology : " It will thus be clear to you that we are not for a sectarian Christ. We neither believe ourselves, nor do we ask any one to believe in the divinity of Christ, that is, the Godhead of Christ. When we ask you to accept Christ, we do not mean by Christ the man-made God, because we have had enough of man-worship ; nay, worse than that, the stone-worship ; and I say worse than these two, the brute worship also. We do not mean by Christ, man-God. Was not Jesus the son of man ? How can the son of man be the Almighty God ? You, my Christian brethren, may say that Christ was the son of God. Exactly so ; but His being the son of God disproves rather than proves any claim for him to Godhead. It clearly shows that He was the ' created,' and not the Creator. How can you confound the ' sent' with the ' sender,' the ' messenger' with the King of kings ? How can you exalt the son to the rank and dignity of the Father, who is All-Perfection ?" The pamphlet from which the above is quoted and other extracts are to be presented, was published in 1882 under the auspices of the " Brahmo Mandir, Lahore" at the *Tribune* Press. Its author calls himself " a Punjabi Brahmo of the New Dispensation," and, though its style is not characterized by much purity and elegance, it is an unexceptionably correct index to the views entertained by Mr. Sen and his followers.

Mr. Sen's Christology, like the other articles of his

shifting creed, passed through varied phases of development, and rose from one degree of perfection to another ; but in its completed form it fell far short of the belief of the Church. Latterly he allowed his views on the Person of Christ to be shaped by wild speculations similar to those indulged in by the champions of the varied phases of Gnosticism which prevailed in the first and second centuries of the Christian era, and which attempted a heterogeneous mixture of Christian truth with the form of philosophy called Neo-Platonism. For instance, when he affirms that Christ dwelt as an idea in the Father before the creation of the world, the mind is called back to the theory of ideas elaborated by Plato, and the modifications it underwent in the hands of Philo and some champions of the Gnostic heresy. The archetypal ideas of the Greek philosopher were transformed by the Jewish thinker into potencies or forces, and these were all united into an æon, called the Power of powers, the Idea of ideas. This aggregate potency was subsequently personified by some Gnostic philosophers into what they were pleased to call the æon Christ. This personified idea, the first of a series of æons the genealogy of which was set forth with minuteness of detail, descended, according to Cerinthus, and entered into the substance of Jesus at the time of His baptism, and left Him before His arrest and crucifixion, staying with but not partaking of His passion. As the Gnostics attempted to bring into the Church many of the conceits and fancies of Greek philosophy as modified by Philo, Mr. Sen incorporated or tried to incorporate a little of Hindu philosophy with Christian truth. In Vedic times God was called Sachchitananda, and represented as a trinitarian essence consisting of Sat, or Existence, Chit, or Intelligence, and Ananda,

or Joy. The second element of this trinity, Chit, was somewhat like the Logos or Reason or Thought of Platonic philosophy, and the Power of Philo. Mr. Sen pressed this element into service, and represented it as the Christ who had dwelt as an Idea in the bosom of God, a Thought or a Potency. The Spirit of the Christ, or the brightest effluence from Him, descended and took possession of the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, and made Him a bright example of purity, love, self-surrender, and martyr-like devotion. But the Christ did not confine Himself to this Prince of Reformers, or make Him the sole depository of His spirit. He favored the other great reformers that cluster around Him, Socrates, Confucius, Buddha, Nanak, Theodore Parker, and Emerson, and many others too numerous to be named, with bright effluences, which made them also examples of the excellences which shone in Jesus a little more brightly. And when the world was brought to the verge of moral ruin by religious disputes and theological wrangling, the last bright effluence descended and took possession of the person of Keshub Chunder Sen, and made him the centre of a dispensation of peace and concord ! The Christ of Babu Keshub Chunder Sen is an Imaginary Christ, an Ideal Christ, a Force, an Intelligence, an Abstraction with potentialities entombed in it. His Christ was not the historical Christ worshipped in the Church.

But it must be added that the Potency is all-embracing, not by any means confined to the roll of reformers and devotees. A particle of it is to be found in every human being, if not in every unit of the animal creation and every object of the material world. The Christ has diffused Himself by self-diremption through the three kingdoms of nature, and the various orders of

beings which inhabit ethereal regions, and which may be represented as æons proceeding from the Universal Father through Him. Mr. Sen's utterances on the Person of our Lord are characterized, as all his utterances are, by incoherence, ambiguity, and mysteriousness ; and they cannot possibly be made the basis of a consistent Christology. But if all his utterances, earlier and later, were carefully sifted, they would tend to bring one to the conclusions at which we have arrived, not only after careful study, but after a long conversation with him, and many an interesting talk with many of his leading followers.

The personal experiences to which Mr. Protap Chunder Mazoomdar called attention in a grand meeting held in Boston are fitted to uphold these conclusions regarding Mr. Sen's Christology. That much must be deducted from Mr. Mazoomdar's statement is apparent from the rhetorical embellishments with which it abounds. The man cannot be credited with much earnestness or practical good sense who in a narrative of personal conversion cannot rise above the rhetoric displayed in the following sentences : " The gloomy and haunted shades of the summer evening had suddenly thickened into darkness, and all things far and near had assumed an unearthly mysteriousness. I sat near the large lake in the Hindu College compound. Above me rose in a sombre mass the giant, grim old seesum-tree, under the far-spreading foliage of which I had played so often, and my father played before me. A sobbing, gusty wind swam over the water's surface, the ripples sounded on the grassy bank, the breeze rustled in the highest regions of the great tree." In the narrative spun out in this pompous style Mr. Mazoomdar expresses the peace he experienced after a period of relig-



ious struggle in consequence of a blessing he received from Christ in these words : “ Jesus lay discovered in my heart as a strange human kindred love, as a repose, a sympathetic consolation, an unpurchased treasure to which I was freely invited.” Again : “ It was not a bodily Christ then ; it is much less a bodily emanation now. A character, spirit, a holy, sacrificed, exalted self, whom I recognize as the true Son of God.” A Christian may speak of the presence of Christ in his heart in these words, but as he believes that Christ in heaven has a human body, though spiritualized and glorified, he cannot possibly describe Him as only a “ character,” a “ spirit,” a “ self,” a “ love,” a “ repose,” a “ consolation ;” and his creed makes it impossible for him to draw a sharp line of demarcation between His “ bodily” and His spiritual presence in the soul. Mr. Mazoomdar attributes to Christ a kind of “ personality,” a personality with which the æons of Philo and the Gnostics were invested, a personality which Plato gave to his ideas, and between which and impersonality there is scarcely a shade of difference. The presence of this tiny, intangible, mysterious personality in his soul—that is, of the love, repose, and consolation he experienced—has to be accounted for ; and Mr. Mazoomdar traces it to “ the indwelling presence of God alone.” Christ, therefore, is the *effect* not the *cause* of his conversion and sanctification !

The views of the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Atonement of Christ presented in the pamphlet already referred to and laid under contribution confirm what has been said regarding Mr. Sen’s Christology. Regarding the Incarnation, the writer says : “ Who will accept the Sacred Word of God, or what effect can this Word have upon the unbelieving world, until it is



transformed into a living character in the lives of the believers themselves? Hence religion is character. Nineteen centuries ago a rare phenomenon was witnessed by the world. Religion was brought down from its Himalayan heights to the plain level of humanity. The Word of God which is often on men's lips was eaten and digested by Jesus. Being thus assimilated, 'the Word was made flesh.' " This writer does not seem to have made as much progress in theosophical speculation as the leader whom he implicitly follows, and he veers about in his statements about the Word of God, inclining on the whole to the view which represents it as identical with revealed truth. But it is worthy of notice that if we identify the Word of God with the Reason of Platonic philosophy, or the all-embracing Potency of Philo, or the Logos of Gnosticism, we have here almost the same view of the incarnation which was propounded by Cerinthus and his followers.

On the crucifixion of Christ we have these utterances: "What is meant by Cross? Cross is the symbol of crucifixion. But crucifixion of what? Of the body of Christ? What! Christ *came* and *lived* and *died* to this *end* in the world—to commit suicide—for is it not written in the Gospels that Jesus surrendered Himself into the hands of His enemies of His own accord? What a monstrous view then of the crucifixion of Christ! No, not the crucifixion of the body of Christ. Then of what? Of the soul of Christ? Never; that is simply impossible. The soul of Christ is immortal, and hence cannot be crucified. At least you Christians who believe in the resurrection of Christ can never say so. Of the good works and holy life of Christ? Even this cannot be, since character never dies. If then it is not the crucifixion of

the body of Christ, of the soul of Christ, of the divine life of Christ, what is it then that bleeds on the cross ? The crucifixion of Christ is not a dream that Christ dreamt. It is a fact in the religious world. It is *the* fact in the life of every God-fearing Christian man or woman. Something was crucified in which the whole Christendom seeks atonement. Viewed in the light of the New Dispensation, it was the self-sacrifice, the crucifixion of the lower or the human self of Christ. Jesus, you vow, was the Son of man as well as the Son of God. The Son of God was not crucified, can never be crucified. While on the earth this heaven-born Son was at one with the Father, and now He sits on the right hand of God. But the Son of man was crucified." Barring the ludicrous mistake into which the writer falls when he represents Christians as believing in the resurrection of the soul of Christ, after having pointed out the impossibility of its death, here we see a broad line of distinction drawn between Christ as human and Christ as divine, which Christians repudiate and which nothing but the theory of an æon entering into and enlivening the humanity of Jesus can justify. And the crucifixion of Christ is distinctly represented as indicating the death of His lower self, and as repeated in every man of God on the surface of the globe. The writer elsewhere calls Christ God-man, and to protect poor Christians from misapprehension, thus explains the phrase : " Christ was not simply good man, but God-man, which means godly-man." Every godly man therefore has a bit of that æon which remained in Him, but did not partake either of His frailties or of His sufferings !

The writer's notion of the atonement cannot but be of a piece with what he says about the crucifixion of

Christ. The atonement is that act of spiritual self-sacrifice in Christ which is repeated in every godly man; and without which complete devotion to the service of God is an impossibility. The writer after having confounded divine grace with the law of God, nay, after having represented it as "the law itself," says : "Now the law of God is nothing but the Holy Word of God. Hence to believe in God's Word is to receive His grace. God's Word is full of grace and justice, and in the fulfilment of that Word is the salvation of the sinner. But a real belief in the Word of God necessitates, as I have already stated, the sacrifice in the interests of humanity of all that is dearest to the believer in this world, nay, his very life, if need be. Therefore God's grace comes through kurbani (sacrifice). Nay, it is kurbani itself. The idea of kurbani is as universal as the Word itself, but as the Word is made flesh in very rare instances, so in like manner genuine cases of kurbani are very few and far between." The confusion of ideas presented in this passage is perhaps to be found nowhere except in Mr. Sen's discourses, and those of others whom he has taught to dream and rhapsodize as he did to his heart's content. The words grace, law, and sacrifice are used as synonymous or thoroughly identical in meaning, and salvation is made dependent on our reception of what is meant by them. Attach the meanings these words ordinarily explain, and you have in the passage confusion worse confounded ; but apply the æon theory, and it ceases to be meaningless. If the Word of God *alias* grace, *alias* sacrifice were regarded as a potency its reception into the heart could not but result in complete self-surrender and self-immolation.

The æon theory is wrought out even more promi-

nently in what the writer says on regeneration : "Regeneration is only possible through faith in self-sacrifice. So long as the self in us lives, we should not for a moment believe that we are saved. It is when the self is mercilessly cut into pieces and is dead that we truly believe and are in reality saved. I do not mean by self the self that comes from above, but the unbelieving self in man, the root of all worldliness." Here we have a double self, the human and the divine, as in Christ. Let it be remembered that in the scheme of salvation thus developed, Christ is the subject of conversion, regeneration, and sanctification, not the author thereof.

We do not for a moment affirm that the ambiguous expressions in these passages cannot be made by a pardonable stretch of charity to conform to Christian ideas ; but we do maintain that nobody can carefully study the literature of the New Dispensation without coming to the conclusion that they are intended to degrade rather than properly represent the Lord Jesus Christ and His great salvation. Mr. Sen may justly be represented as a Gnostic of the Hindu school, and as the author of a heresy opposed to the vital truths of Christianity. Tradition assures us that the beloved Apostle John peremptorily declined to enter the same baths with Cerinthus because he was afraid the structures might come down to crush his damnable heresy ; while Marcion, a follower of the heresiarch, when he requested Polycarp to own him as a brother, had this sharp reply : "I own thee as the firstborn of Satan." In the teeth of such facts, why should we allow ourselves to be impelled by morbid sentimentalism to receive as a champion of Christianity a man who systematically lowered the Person and work of Christ by dis-

torting facts, misconstruing texts, and presenting the creations of a diseased imagination as revelations from God ?

Let it be added that our Lord is not even named in the creed of the New Dispensation. To enable the reader to see this, let the creed be once more presented :

“ One God, one Scripture, one Church.

“ Eternal Progress of the Soul.

“ Communion of Prophets and Saints.

“ Fatherhood and Motherhood of God, Brotherhood of man and Sisterhood of woman.

“ Harmony of Knowledge and Holiness, Love and Work, Yoga and Asceticism in their highest development.

“ Loyalty to Sovereign.”

Christ is not mentioned even by name, but He doubtless occupies a place, perhaps the chief place, among the Prophets and Saints with whose disembodied spirits communion is to be maintained, and He shares the veneration of mankind with Mohammed, who brought down a text from heaven to justify his illicit intercourse with the wife of his adopted son ; Narad, the notorious makebate among the Hindu gods ; Chaitanya, who revived in Bengal the worship of the god of licentiousness, justly called the Bacchus of India ; Nanak, who cherished the wild idea of effecting a union between Hinduism and Mohammedanism ; Buddha and his modern imitator, Comte, who tabooed theology and divorced morality from religion ; Theodore Parker, who lived by abusing Christian orthodoxy and wavered between monotheism and pantheism ; Emerson, who believed in nothing but self ! The Christian's blood must be cold indeed who can see the crucified Nazarene, the Captain of his salvation, the Author and Finisher of



his faith, degraded to such association without being filled with indignation !

Mr. Sen's One Scripture is a direct attack on the infallibility of those records which we Christians look up to as the standard of our theology and religion. The Church of Christ is divided into almost innumerable denominations, and it is unhappily the scene of theological disputes and ecclesiastical broils, now certainly bloodless, but once by no means so. But all its conflicting sections have vied with one another in regarding the Bible as the Word of God, the rule of faith and practice, and the last court of appeal in all controversies, theological and ecclesiastical. An attack on this palladium of truth is an attack on the foundations of Christianity. What treatment does this Book of books receive at the hands of the Brahmo reformer ? It is placed on a par with the Vedas, the Koran, and even the Purans. The writer of the pamphlet alluded to says : " But the question here arises, What is it in which the sinner is required to have his faith ? It is essentially necessary to settle this important question first of all. Are we to believe in the Vedas, or the Koran, the Bible or the Purans ? Are we to believe the Christian or the Mohammedan, the Hindu or the Buddhist, or are we to depend solely upon our own intellects for guidance in such a solemn question as that of everlasting life or death ? The Christians believe that their Bible contains the whole truth, and nothing but the truth ; and so do the Mohammedans, the Hindus, and others say in regard to their respective scriptures." Again : " In whose word then are we to believe ? You are already aware that we, Brahmos, recognize the sublime truths contained in the scriptures of different nations, and give due credit to all those who



*sincerely* preach and teach according to them. Because the New Dispensation, to which we belong, has come not 'to destroy' but to 'fulfil,' not to separate but to collect all the scattered fragments of Divine Revelation, and to unite them into a homogeneous whole." Need we say that the Christians, who show a culpable proneness to patronize the New Dispensation, encourage that the issue of which is the degradation of their Lord to the level of human beings, and of their Holy Scriptures to the level of human writings?

Here it should be remarked that Mr. Sen, in calling upon men to recognize his ability to construct out of the varied scriptures, in which truth is in his opinion sadly intermixed with and buried under error, a scripture containing the truth and nothing but the truth, not only forgets but contradicts himself. Mr. Sen calls himself a sinner, and goes so far as to affirm that he has, like Judas Iscariot, betrayed his Master. He cannot but admit that as a sinner his heart is depraved, his judgment is warped, and his native perception of truth is made obtuse. If so, how is it possible for him to separate with intuitional or unerring certainty the wheat from the chaff in the varied scriptures, and gather the one into his garner and burn the other with fire unquenchable? If in reply he affirms he has what appears to him true in these scriptures attested by divine revelations, how is he sure that he does not mistake for them his own fancies, especially when subjective evidence is the only evidence utilized, and that of an objective character thrown out of calculation? But what Mr. Sen cannot do Christ could. He was, according even to Mr. Sen, sinless, and consequently His moral nature was not vitiated, and its percipient faculties paralyzed. He could instinctively perceive truth

wherever it might be found, separate it from error with unerring certainty, and build up a system to which no exception can possibly be taken by minds free from the incubus of sin. And when Mr. Sen raises up the standard of a dispensation higher than that of Christ, he simply contradicts and stultifies himself. He may, however, say that he is only reviving the defunct economy of Christ ; if so, what right has he to characterize his dispensation as new ?

His One Church represents not only a heterogeneous, nondescript compound of conflicting beliefs, but an agglomeration of the varied symbols of worship and sacraments of religion associated with the varied systems of faith prevalent in the world. We Christians have no business to object to his having a “sacred dance,” a “sacred jugglery,” or meetings—shall we say *séances* ?—held to hold communion with the spirit of Socrates or the shade of Menu. But we cannot but object to the audacity with which he was pleased to desecrate the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist under the banner of his new dispensation. The holy sacraments have, we maintain, been always administered in the church by men appointed for the purpose, and in a manner calculated to set forth their importance as means of grace, if not sources of spiritual life ; and to-day, as forms instituted by Christ Himself, they are regarded by all classes of Christians with peculiar reverence, not certainly with superstitious veneration. And certainly they cannot with indifference or apathy behold these holy rites parodied, or converted into farces by men who never take the trouble of looking into their intrinsic meaning or the purposes they are intended to subserve. Why should Christian patronage be lavished on a Church in which Christ is brought

down to the level of human beings, the Bible is represented as a piece of human composition, the God of the Old Testament is facetiously described as "a bearded Jew," and the holy sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are burlesqued ?

Again the exaggerated importance Mr. Sen attaches in his creed to Yoga and asceticism discriminates it from the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was the man of the people, and His religion is the religion of the people. Christianity sanctifies the varied relations and occupations of life, dignifies labor, hallows matrimony, elevates society, purifies trade and commerce, consecrates the varieties of industries and activities of which the world is the theatre, the trophies of human ingenuity, the triumphs of civilization, and the products of mental toil. And it nowhere represents asceticism as a stepping-stone to extraordinary knowledge and insight and high-toned piety. Asceticism was doubtless incorporated with it, as well as the wild speculations of heathen philosophy by philosophizing Christians ; and it is a fact that it has not yet been wholly emancipated from its influence. But it forms no part of our religion, and it is only an excrescence to be lopped off. But in Mr. Sen's creed asceticism is the most prominent element, and high attainments in spiritual knowledge and piety are unattainable excepting through the path of mortification and penance pointed out by it. In this respect, therefore, his system and Christianity are at war with each other.

We have, we think, succeeded in demonstrating that there is a gulf impassable between the creed of the New Dispensation and our holy religion, and that nothing short of morbid sentimentalism can induce a person to represent its author as a champion of Christianity.

Mr. Sen's religion cannot be characterized by a better word than one of his own invention. It is a piece of "sacred jugglery," fitted to deceive superficial thinkers, but not those whose views of religion are based on a deep insight into the necessities, longings, and yearnings of the human soul. That he believed that it was destined to supersede the religions of the world, and be universal in its influence and paramount in its sway is certain, and may be advanced as an additional proof of his fanaticism. But that this belief is shared in by men, who, like Mr. Protap Chunder Mazoomdar and Mr. Kisto Behari Sen, his brother, have calmer minds and feelings more controllable, would be an inexplicable phenomenon, if the existence of sincere Comtists and Mormons did not convince us of the possibility of human minds being victimized by any theory, however wild and ludicrous !

## CHAPTER VII.

### SADHARAN BRAHMO SOMAJ.

THE Sadharan Brahmo Somaj may be looked upon both as a revival of genuine Brahmoism and as a protest against the errors with which it is interlarded by the champions of the New Dispensation. It seems to have had in the elaboration of its creed and constitution the double purpose of resuscitating the Brahmo religion as it stood when, freed from the fetters of primitive pantheism, it proclaimed the supremacy of reason in matters of faith and religious consciousness, and of declaring a war against the innovations in doctrine and practice grafted upon it by Mr. Sen. And in all that it has done since the beginning of its corporate life about four years ago, it seems to have been influenced by this twofold motive.

This fact it will be our business to set forth by a reference to (1) its Creed, (2) its Constitution, and (3) its Practical Achievements. But before we do so we must present a brief sketch of its very short history.

Its origin is to be traced, as has already been shown, to the zeal and exertions of the intelligent party the members of which protested against the innovations ushered in by Mr. Sen and his missionaries. By measures more or less violent they extorted a series of concessions from their opponents ; but when in the case of the Kuch Behar marriage all reconciliation was impossible, they separated in a body, held a meeting, and

formally deposed the minister, Mr. Sen. They then endeavored to take possession of the Brahmo Temple as the property of the Somaj they represented ; but Mr. Sen, as the sole trustee, had the sinews of war in his hands, and they were foiled. They then held a public meeting and formally organized the New Somaj. This was done on the 15th of May, 1878.

They then began the work of recasting with unwonted enthusiasm. Within an incredibly short time a thorough revolution was effected in almost every feature of its social life. The creed was recast, the constitution was recast, and the varied branches of practical work were recast. Extraordinary sacrifices were made, donations and subscriptions were secured, and a new Temple or Prayer Hall fitted to seat about a thousand persons was erected. This temple was consecrated within less than three years after the disruption, and the following "declaration" was read on the grand occasion of its formal dedication :

" This day, the 10th day of March, 1287, according to the Bengalee era, and the 22d of January, 1881, according to the Christian era, in the fifty-first year of the Brahmo Somaj, we dedicate this hall to the worship of the one true God. From this day its doors shall be open to all classes of people without distinction of caste or social position. Men or women, old or young, wise or ignorant, rich or poor, all classes will meet here as brethren to worship Him who is the Author of our salvation. Excepting this most Holy Being, no created being or thing shall be worshipped here ; nor shall divine honors be paid to any man or woman as God, or equal to God, or an incarnation of God, or as specially appointed by God. It shall be ever borne in mind in this hall that the great mission of Brahmoism is to promote spiritual freedom among men and to enable them to establish direct relationship with God, and the sermons, discourses, and prayers of this place shall be so moulded as to help that spirit. It shall ever be its aim and endeavor to enable all who hunger after righteousness to know God, who is life of our life, and to worship Him direct.

" The catholicity of Brahmoism shall also be preserved here. No



book or man shall ever be acknowledged as infallible and the only way of salvation ; but nevertheless due respect shall be paid to all scriptures and the good and great of all ages and all countries. In the sermons, discourses, and prayers used in this hall, no scripture, or sect, or founder of a sect shall ever be ridiculed, reviled, or spoken of contemptuously. With due respect untruth shall be exposed, and truth vindicated. No man or class of men shall be here regarded as the elect or favorite of God, and the rest of mankind as lost to that favor. Anything calculated to compromise this catholic spirit shall never be countenanced.

“ The spirituality of our doctrine shall be carefully maintained. Flowers, spices, burnt offerings, candles, and other material accompaniments of worship shall never be used, and care shall be taken to avoid everything tending to reduce religion to mere parade and lifeless forms. It shall be the object of all our preachings and discourses in this place to teach men and women to love God, to seek piety, to hate sin, to grow in devotion and spirituality, to promote purity among men and women, to uproot all social evils, and to encourage virtuous deeds. Anything that will directly or indirectly encourage idolatry, engender superstition, rob spiritual freedom, lower conscience, or corrupt morals, shall never be countenanced. May this hall ever remain a refuge and resting-place for all the weary sojourners of this world ! May the sinner find consolation and hope in this hall ; may the weak be strengthened, and may all who hunger and thirst find food and drink for their souls ! With this hope and prayer we dedicate this hall in the name of the one true God. May He help and guide us ! Amen.”

The document is admirable, barring one gross verbal inaccuracy which represents God as a “ created Being ;” and it embodies the spirit of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj, in conjunction with its double purpose of revival and protest. The worship of one true God is revived, together with the spirituality, catholicity, and tolerance of Brahmoism ; but a firm and bold protest is put upon record against the innovations of the once progressive, but now retrogressive party. The infallibility of a book or a prophet is emphatically denied, and all tendency to man-worship, such as led to extravagances and superstitions in the Somaj, is discouraged

and browbeaten. The spirit of ritualism, which is an important element of the New Dispensation, and which manifests itself in sensational demonstrations, receives in the document the potent check it deserves ; while spiritual freedom, compromised so sadly in Mr. Sen's church, is reasserted with due emphasis. This document, therefore, offers a clue to or rather embodies the genius and tendency of the new movement.

Let us in the first place give the reader an insight into the Creed of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj. It consists of four general principles and twenty-three articles of faith. The general principles are these :

- (1) Belief in the existence of an infinite Creator.
- (2) Belief in the immortality of the soul.
- (3) Belief in the duty and necessity of spiritual worship of God.
- (4) Disbelief in any infallible book or man, as the means of salvation.

These general principles present a reaffirmation of the general creed upheld by Mr. Sen himself before the unfettered development of his peculiar notions, and a protest against these. God, Duty, and Immortality—these are the constituent elements of the creed preached in America by Theodore Parker and in India and England by his disciple Mr. Sen. And these are one and all embodied in this statement of general principles. But Babu Keshub Chunder Sen has, of late especially, pointed to himself as an infallible medium of communication between heaven and earth, and represented documents written by him as proclamations issued by God Himself. He has, in short, assumed the position of an infallible book and man ; and the last of these principles is levelled against such extravagant pretensions on his part. Even in its enunciation of general principles

the Sadharan party has been guided by its double purpose of revival and protest.

The Articles of Faith may also be divided into two classes—those which embody a revival of genuine Brahmoism, and those which lift up a protest against the innovations so often referred to. The first class give some insight into the glorious attributes of God, into the nature of the worship and obedience due to Him, into the constitution and destiny of man, into the nature of sin, salvation, and regeneration; and into the life of reward or punishment ahead of human beings living in this world. The Ninth Article presents a definition of sin better than any that have emanated from Brahmoism : “ By *sin* we understand the conscious and wilful *commission* or indulgence of a deed, thought, or desire which leads the soul away from the Divine Will, and also the conscious and wilful omission of any deed, thought, or desire which leads toward the Divine Will.” This is certainly precise and philosophical language, not merely one of those rhapsodies in which Mr. Sen is so decidedly prone to indulge, but the definition suggests a question of great importance, viz., what is the Divine Will ?

To this question an answer, philosophical in diction and on the whole accurate in thought, is given in the following article : “ By Divine Will we understand that universal, eternal, and constant action of the Divine Spirit which, under given conditions, is manifested in different shapes and proportions, through our reason, conscience, affections, and will. When it breathes through *reason* it is *wisdom*, enabling us to perceive the *true* ; when flowing through the conscience it is *virtue*, giving a sense and knowledge of the right ; when operating through the *affections* it is love,

leading us to seek the *good of others* ; and when influencing the will it is *courage*, giving firmness to stand upon duty. The conditions of the action of this will are *love* and *self-surrender*. . . .”

Now we may accept this phraseology and the sentiment or theory couched in it. But all difficulty is not removed. The question stares us in the face—how are the conditions to be realized in us sinful beings ? How is the dominant selfishness of our hearts to be extinguished ? How is the spirit of love and self-surrender to be generated and matured in a heart depraved to the very core ? The history of the world in general, and of individual souls in particular, proves to a demonstration the unfittedness of the revelation of God embodied in nature and human consciousness to effect the revolution needed in the human heart. A revelation higher than that is a desideratum ; and as Brahmoism in its Protean phases cannot supply the want, all attempt on its part to re-establish the harmony between the Divine Will and the stubborn and perverse will of man must end in egregious failure.

But will not repentance and prayer solve the difficulty ? The Twelfth Article runs thus : “ We believe that sincere repentance and earnest prayer are the means of his (man’s) reconciliation with the Father. Repentance is the awakening of love, *faith* is the maturity thereof, and regeneration is the result.” To produce genuine repentance and lead to earnest, believing prayer, a revelation of God’s love, more overpowering than that which Brahmoism can point to, is needed. The conditions cannot be realized by Brahmoism ; and all its talk of salvation and regeneration is like the well-known saying of Archimedes, that if he could find a place to fix his lever on he could raise the world.

Our Sadharan Brahmo friends have been lamentably deficient in their philosophical insight into the dire consequences of sin. They emphatically oppose the doctrine of original sin, though even the sceptical scientists of the day have been led by their own line of investigation, and in spite of their concealed or open antagonism to Christianity, to recognize it as a fact of science, and to rear their theories of evolution on it as a stable basis. But they carry their temerity up to the highest pitch of development when they represent the world as in a natural condition. Their Sixteenth Article runs thus : " We do not look upon the world as a delusion, like the pantheist, nor as a place of bondage, like the believer in transmigration, nor as the heritage of fallen humanity and consequently an abode of sin and suffering, like the orthodox Christian ; but we believe that the world is a nursery for the soul, beautifully adapted for its growth and development, and for the exercise and culture of its moral and spiritual powers during the first stage of its existence, and that all the spiritual and moral ties that bind man to his family and to his kind are sacred and divinely ordained."

In this statement we see embodied the beautiful but thoroughly groundless theory of the optimists. Sin is virtue in the making, and suffering is essential to progress. The incalculable amount of sin and suffering we see in the world is one of the natural conditions of its existence and progress ; and it is absurd to represent it, as the Bible does, as an unnatural phenomenon realized by the perverse will of man, in contravention of the Divine Will, though in accordance with the Divine Decrees, or God's plan of administration. But optimism is based on the paradox that obedience proceeds from disobedience, virtue from vice, light from dark-



ness, death from life ! No proof of human degradation is stronger than the fact that man would sooner swallow this monstrous conclusion than admit the inherent malignity of sin and the perniciousness of its results, not the less disastrous and direful because overruled for good by grace divine. Brahmoism and all the isms of the world would vanish into thin air if adequate views of the intense blackness of sin and of the inflexibility of the antagonism which subsists between it and the intense holiness of God could be naturalized in the world.

Let us now advert to the second class of the articles in question—viz., those which lift up a vigorous protest against the innovations associated with the New Dispensation. The Twenty-first Article is a protest against Mr. Sen's claim to infallibility, put forth cautiously by him, but most unequivocally by his followers : " We do not believe in any divinely revealed book, nor in any infallible guide or pope ; but we regard all perceptions of the really true, good, and holy in any book or man as revelations of God, and reverentially bow before them." The Twentieth Article sets forth the necessity of democracy in the Brahmo Church as contradistinguished from the autocracy of the New Dispensation : " In accordance with the above spirit, we look upon the Church as essentially a family of brothers and sisters, and as such a commonwealth in the strictest sense of the term ; where the abuse or misappropriation of power by one or a few is unfair, ungodly, and condemnable."

The utility of this last declaration may be seen when it is placed in juxtaposition with the following dictum of the *Sunday Mirror* (November 13, 1881) : " Religious leaders are expected to speak with authority—an



authority received from heaven. The very ring of earnestness and sincerity which characterizes their utterances proves that the voice with which they speak is not theirs. It follows, therefore, that ignorance of God gives no title to vote ; and such ignorance is the distinguishing trait of the majority of a community. To talk of democracy in matters transcendental is to attain the height of the ludicrous. Our opinion is that a church should be eminently aristocratic and not democratic. We use the word ‘aristocratic’ in its literal sense, meaning the best.” The “ring” of the passage is Carlylish : the majority of mankind are brutes, and must be ruled despotically by the few, who are Princes of Men. The difference lies in the literal sense in which the word “aristocratic” is used. The question, however, arises, Who is to separate the good from the bad ? The party looked upon as the good in the Church of the New Dispensation are looked upon as the bad by the champions of the Sadharan Somaj, and *vice versa* !

The tendency of Mr. Sen’s utterances to pantheism is so obvious, in spite of his occasional and unequivocal protest against it, that the creed of the Sadharan Somaj would be incomplete as a counterpoise if it did not embody a declaration against it. Again, his parade of asceticism needs a counter-demonstration ; and we have both these forms of error denounced in more than one of these articles. It is enough to quote Article Fifth : “ We believe that the way to this salvation is not through *pantheism*, which regards sin and misery as delusions, nor through *asceticism*, which aspires to uproot the *desires* and subjugate the body, but through love, which teaches the soul to seek the will of the Father as the highest good. It does not snatch the

soul away from temptations, nor violently uproot the desires, but places it above them and beyond them by making them matters of indifference to its purpose or aim."

And lastly, Mr. Sen seems to uphold the popular belief in a material heaven and a material hell, or a heaven and hell not only as states of the mind, but as places of abode. We say *seems* deliberately, as passages may be culled from his notoriously incoherent, rhapsodical deliverances fitted to uphold the very opposite conclusion. In his lecture on "Our Faith and Our Experiences" he points most emphatically to a home in the next world "as the most glittering of the prizes in reserve for the believer." "In natural theology, in pure theism, there can be no divinity without a future world, no immortality without a divinity. The intuitive eye raised above beholds God ; directed forward, it sees its future home in the next world. A Father without a home, a home without a father—that is an anomaly against which nature rebels." There is a protest against this doctrine in the creed of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj, and it is embodied in Article Seventh : "But we do not imagine any material Heaven or Hell. There may be worlds or spheres, where human souls find themselves placed during the several stages of their progress and development after death, but Heaven and Hell with us are not *places* but *states*. By heaven we mean the joy consequent upon knowing and loving the Father, and upon being allowed to hold unclouded intercourse with Him—this being the highest reward of virtue ; and by hell we mean that miserable state where the soul is made unworthy of intercourse with God and finds delight in unworthiness—which also is the worst punishment of sin."

We do not know whether or how far our Brahmo friends are influenced by certain misrepresentations afloat relative to the Christian ideas of heaven and hell. We Christians are sometimes represented as being *exclusively* materialistic in our views of the future state of rewards and punishments, in which mankind instinctively believe ; heaven and hell are to us *places*, and nothing more—places of corporeal enjoyment and corporeal torment. But such representation is grossly when ignorantly, and maliciously when knowingly, made. Our ideas are both materialistic and spiritualistic. Heaven and hell are, according to our belief, both *places* and *states*. We believe that the conditions of our present life, associated as it is inseparably with bodily infirmities and the punitive element in the economies of nature and dispensations of Providence so prominently brought to our notice, must be essentially altered ere all obstacles to our perfect development and perfect enjoyment can possibly be removed. A world therefore free from the disastrous consequences of sin noticeable in this, or this world thoroughly liberated from these consequences, can alone be a fit abode for blessed souls prepared for the fulness of hallowed activity and ethereal felicity of which they are capable. Hence the idea of a material heaven, or a world with material and moral conditions different from those noticeable in this world ! For the same or a similar reason, a material hell, or a place of punishment where suffering is not mitigated by the innumerable vestiges of benevolence which are among the characteristic elements of the present economy, or of the economy of this world, is also needed to punish souls unalterably determined to turn a deaf ear to all exhortations to repentance and faith, as well as to prevent them from doing further

mischief. But Christianity maintains that a man must be heaven before he is sent to heaven, or be hell before he is sent to hell. Heaven and hell are, according to its teachings, both states and places.

1. Now let us turn to the Constitution of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj. The Somaj is a democracy in the proper sense of the term, and its great source of power is the General Meeting of its members, and representatives and delegates from the Somajes affiliated to it, held annually, "and oftener if there be need." The business of this Imperial Assembly is both legislative and executive, like that of the General Conference of the Methodists. As a legislative body it hears and approves the annual report of the Somaj, modifies existing laws or frames new rules when necessary, and discusses questions fitted to promote the welfare of the Church. As an executive assembly it elects a General Committee of forty members, to meet every quarter and conduct the general business of the Church. To secure despatch and efficiency in the conduct of business this somewhat huge body delegates its power to a small Executive Committee of a dozen members, chosen by it annually, reserving to itself the power of supervision, which it exercises through its quarterly meetings. The Executive Committee is assisted by a body of office-bearers, four in number, elected annually by the General Meeting of the members and delegates. It is not necessary to repeat that this constitution is a standing protest against the autocracy embodied in Mr. Sen's organization. Mr. Sen has a "Missionary Conference," but it is somewhat like the ministry of an irresponsible despot who appoints its members, retains them so long as they are found obsequious and compliant, but casts them adrift the moment they are found guilty of cher-

ishing an independent thought. Mr. Sen's missionaries are on all questions, important or non-important, brought up to "the level" of Mr. Sen's thought by some influence unknown to the outside world. Mr. Sastri's remarks on the organization of his Somaj are both accurate and pungent : " However, let that pass ; the reader cannot have any doubt now that the New Dispensation is not a constitutional church properly so called. The whole thing rests upon the ' inspired authority ' of one man. Perhaps I will be doing injustice if I do not notice Mr. Sen's ' Missionary Conference.' It is a self-elected council, which is said to deliberate on Church matters—and many and prolonged are its discussions carried on, I am told ; but there is this peculiarity about it, that all voices at last find an easy solution in one ' inspired ' voice—for not a single voice of dissent has been up to this time recorded against any of Mr. Sen's proceedings. So I leave the reader to ponder over this mockery of a constitutional council."

The conditions to eligibility to membership are four. Let them be presented in Mr. Sastri's own words : " First, the applicant for membership must be above eighteen years of age ; secondly, he must agree to sign the covenant of the Somaj containing the four principles mentioned before ; thirdly, his private character must be pure and moral, for breach of morality in private life makes a member liable to forfeiture of membership ; fourthly, he must agree to pay at least eight annas in the year toward carrying on the work of the Somaj." It is worthy of notice that a public renunciation of caste or badges of idolatry is not made a condition of membership, and therefore the Sadharan Brahmos, as well as those under the banner of Mr.



Sen's Somaj, are divided into two classes—viz., Anusthanic, or those who have discarded caste and idolatrous badges, and those who have not done so. The number of the former is very small indeed, in connection either with this or with the once Progressive but now Retrogressive movement—so small that at Lahore, where the Brahmos have a temple of their own and varied organizations, there was, when the writer visited it, only *one* Anusthanic Brahmo.

The Anusthanic Brahmos have one great privilege denied to those who lack the moral courage they have shown in discarding caste. The members of the Executive Committee, office-bearers, ministers, and missionaries must be chosen only from their ranks. The method in which missionaries are appointed and supported is worthy of commendation. The candidate for the post of a missionary has to apply formally to the Executive Committee, who, if he does not appear properly qualified, transfer him to the charge of a committee called the Missionary Committee. By the members of this committee the books he has to study are prescribed, the lectures he has to attend are got up, the examinations he has to pass are held, and his conduct and progress during what may be called his academic life are watched. When he is furnished with a pass certificate by them, he has to go out and preach for one whole year as a probationer ; and ultimately, when he has proved his ability both in the school of drilling and in the field of action, his name is published for two months as that of an applicant for missionary work, and members of the Somaj are requested to state if they have any serious objections to his appointment. When this season of concluding trial is over, “a day is appointed when special divine service is held, and he is



duly ordained.” Mr. Sastri, from whom all our information regarding the Sadharan Somaj is derived, does not state whether this is done by the solemn imposition of hands, or whether some other mode of ordination is resorted to. He assures us, however, that “the plan sketched out in the above account is yet in a state of design, for the first missionaries being men of long-standing reputation, no such process was felt necessary in their case.”

The missionaries are not salaried men in the proper sense of the term, but they have all their wants supplied by the Executive Committee, who look after their families when they are absent on duty, sanction allowances, according to an estimate made in each individual case of the probable cost of maintenance, and meet emergencies arising from “disease, accident, or death” by special grants. On the whole, missionaries are maintained “in comfort” in or out of the metropolis ; and Fakirism, or the system which sends missionaries out begging, and which is ostensibly but not really in vogue in the Progressive Somaj, is held at a discount.

3. It is time for us to advert to the development of the practical work of the Somaj. Its “mission” is grand, and is unfolded as follows :

“*First*, To preach and propagate the idea of a personal God—the *Parama Purush*, as in Sanscrit He is called—of a God who loves righteousness and hates sin.

“*Secondly*, To preach and propagate, and also to teach by personal example, the idea of true spiritual worship, consisting of communion and prayer, as distinguished from the outward observance of idolatrous rites ; which idea if once properly grasped will inevitably give rise to spiritual struggles.

“*Thirdly*, To divest conceptions of piety of the errors of sentimentalism and mysticism on the one hand, and asceticism and ritualism on the other, and thereby to direct the religious enthusiasm of the

people to channels of practical usefulness, to fields of active philanthropy, and to the elevation of individual and social life.

“*Fourthly*, To seek and establish the grand but often forgotten truth of the brotherhood of man, by the overthrow of caste and every other form of tyranny of class over class ; the elevation and emancipation of woman being an important step in this direction.

“*Fifthly*, To promote freedom of conscience, to kindle the sense of individual independence ; thereby sowing the seeds of domestic, social, political, and spiritual liberty.

“*Sixthly*, To communicate to the body of the people, through the means of individual lives, a living and conquering moral energy, born of faith and earnest work, which will impart strength and vigor to the exhausted moral and spiritual nerves of the race, and will help them to be morally and spiritually regenerated.”

It is scarcely necessary to pause here and notice that the mission of the Sadharan Somaj is a practical, as its creed is a theoretical, protest against the prominent errors of Mr. Sen's Somaj. Mysticism and pantheism are certainly imparting their color, if not their vital substance, to the creed of the Progressive Somaj, and its recent proceedings are eminently fitted to rivet the chains under which the country has been groaning for ages untold. A protest against these aberrations of thought followed by a practical warfare against them is a felt want, and the Sadharan Somaj bids fair to supply it, if it be not within a short time led astray by aberrations thought even more reprehensible. Again, an attempt to uphold independence of thought and assert the rights of reason seems peremptorily demanded by the tendency of the Progressive Somaj to place the collective will of a community under the guidance of one imperious will.

Let us now turn to what the Sadharan Somaj has done to carry out its splendid programme. It has, as we have already intimated, had a commodious hall erected and consecrated for regular worship, and for

giving effect to what may be called both ordinary and extraordinary methods of inculcating religious truth, nurturing religious life, and spreading the blessings of religious growth. The foundation of this hall was laid within eight months after the schism, and it was formally consecrated in January, 1881. During the brief interval the Sadharan Brahmos raised about 30,000 rupees, a very large sum considering their circumstances, for the purpose of erecting this hall and meeting other expenses.

It has established a library in Calcutta for the diffusion of useful knowledge in general, and religious knowledge in particular. This library has a good assortment of books, many of which seem to have been generously presented to it by European and native gentlemen, who, though not Brahmos in any sense of the term, look upon the movement as worthy of encouragement. The library is in working order, and the number of those who avail themselves of it is on the increase.

It has, moreover, organized a benevolent association called the Hita-Sadhini-Sobha, with the avowed objects of aiding indigent pupils and raising the working classes. The association is in an embryonic state, but yet its members have opened a night-school for the working classes, have visited not a few of the homes of poverty in the metropolis, and have helped a small number of poor students.

It has been instrumental in communicating an extraordinary impetus to the cause of female education. Following in the wake of some philanthropic missionaries, they have had a boarding-school organized in connection with the Government Girl School in Calcutta, and a girl belonging to their community having

passed the F.A. examination is now preparing herself for the B.A. degree, along with the Christian girl who had the honor of being the first to pass the Entrance Examination, or of having by her success the doors of the University Examinations thrown open for female candidates.

It has, moreover, organized an Association of Ladies, "with a view to draw the ladies gradually into society, and to teach them to sympathize with topics of general and national interest. Evening parties and social gatherings are frequently held under the auspices of this association, where both the sexes freely meet—a thing quite unknown in the present state of Hindu society—but the want of which, I am strongly of opinion, is one of the principal causes, if not *the* cause, of the widespread social impurity which has become a stigma to our national life."

It has opened a college in the city of Calcutta which takes rank among its first-class educational institutions. Let us give its history in Mr. Sastri's words :

"It was started in the beginning of the year 1873 by Mr. A. M. Bose, lately the president of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj, and a few other leading members. It was formerly a higher class English school, but has within the period of two years risen into a college for training up boys for the higher examinations of the university. This educational institution has served to keep together a number of Brahmo teachers, all of whom are earnest members of the Brahmo Somaj, and most of whom are zealous co-workers in its cause. It also promises to give us a band of earnest-minded young men trained up to habits of honesty and piety."

Mr. Sastri concludes his thick pamphlet with an "appeal," from which we shall present an extract fitted to set forth the growing popularity of the Sadharan Somaj, and the growing unpopularity of that from which its champions seceded about four years

ago : “ In conclusion, I have to appeal to our friends of the New Dispensation for treating us with greater forbearance, for giving up the cruel practice of calling us ‘infidels,’ ‘sceptics,’ ‘rationalists,’ and far worse names, and for shunning the far more painful tactics of stabbing us in the dark. Certainly the fault is not ours if they find themselves deserted and forsaken, and feel their power crumbling away ; for that seems to be the inevitable fate which is sure to overtake all enemies of human freedom in these days of enlightenment and progress. Let them see that they have embraced error, and consequently are spurned by truth. They know it well, and let me confess it candidly, we have as yet very little to attract people to our fold. If then they find our cause prospering and gaining ground, it is not because of any virtue or excellence in us, but owing to the soundness of the principles we profess.”

It is our decided opinion that, looked at from what may be called the Brahmo point of view, the principles of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj are much more rational and defensible than those of the party against which it is a standing and a very successful protest. Mr. Sen’s creed is a heap of contradiction. There is no such thing as paper revelation, and yet not only are truths preached in the name of God, but proclamations issued with the signature, or what is represented as the signature, of God affixed to them ; while dialogues said to have been held between God and Mr. Sen’s disciples are reported *verbatim* ! There is no mediation, and yet important religious truths invariably reach the Somaj through a person who, though unable to muster up courage to assume publicly the dignity and functions of a prophet, calls himself “a singular man,” and represents himself as commissioned to usher in a dispensa-



tion higher than those brought in by Moses or Christ ! God is personal, and yet impersonal ; men are vile, and yet furnished with bright portions of the divine substance ; Christ is a historical character, and yet nothing more than a series of ideas ; worship spiritual, and yet deriving its merit from a series of sensational demonstrations ; the varied religions of the world true, and yet false ! Such are the oddities and monstrosities to which Mr. Sen's utterances may legitimately be reduced ! Compared with this heap of contradiction, the creed of the Sadharan Somaj is rationality itself.

Mr. Sen's practices, moreover, are of a piece with his theories. One day Mr. Sen goes through the farce of drinking the water in which the feet of his missionaries are washed, and the very next day he sees persons prostrating themselves before him and calling him their Lord and Master with tacit approbation. One day he goes out in the garb of a mendicant with a wallet in his hand, and the next day he celebrates his son's marriage with a pomp of which the most pretentious of swells would be proud. One day he lives upon the savory food sent to him as alms by one of his devotees, and the very next he entertains half the respectable people of Calcutta in a style in every respect worthy of the very respectable family to which he belongs. Compared with these obviously meaningless proceedings, those of the Sadharan Somaj are sense itself.

Let us add that the view of Christ maintained by the Sadharan Somaj is decidedly lower and therefore less irrational than that presented in Mr. Sen's utterances. Mr. Sen is guilty of giving publicity to a gross calumny when he represents its champions as ready to call Christ "a cut-throat ;" but he would have been justified in representing them as holding up a picture of by no



means unalloyed perfection. The view they present is the lower of the two views presented in the writings of Theodore Parker. Christ was a very good man, but He was not thoroughly sinless, and His character was marred by certain very gross errors of the head. He certainly believed in His Messiahship, and too precipitately assumed the dignity and functions associated with it. He believed in the existence of spirits, both good and evil, and their dominance over the world, and He believed in His Second Coming. Serious errors of judgment, breeding a little pride and self-exaltation, marred a character which otherwise would have been a model of perfection. Now this view is more rational than that of persons who, while denying His Divinity, represent Him as perfectly sinless, or as a perfect model of virtue. The Christ to whom Mr. Sen's homage is paid is *ideal*, not the historical Christ of the Gospels, as we have shown. But he would speak of the historical Christ in terms of praise adopted by those who, in denying His Divinity and representing Him as a perfect model of virtue in one and the same breath, plunge themselves into an inconsistency of the most glaring nature.

Barring its vigorous protest against the odd innovations of the New Dispensationists, the great achievement of the Sadharan Somaj is the resuscitation of the simple creed of Brahmoism—the creed adopted by the Adi Somaj after it had been liberated from the trammels of pantheism, and preached by Babu Keshub Chunder Sen before he had been demoralized by fulsome adulation. This creed may be represented as correct as far as it goes ; but its insufficiency is as obvious as its accuracy is apparent. It fails to communicate to us such knowledge of God as is calculated to

effectively discourage sin and encourage truth, and it fails to point to us God's appointed remedy for sin.

Man in his present state of corruption cannot do two things—separate himself either from his sins or from God. The love of sin, generated by the law of heredity and invigorated by long-continued indulgence, is in him too strong to be extinguished, and he lives in sin, unwilling and unable to save himself from its bondage. The sublime instinct in him which draws him toward God is equally irrepressible, being, like his love of sin, original and innate. He therefore looks for a religion which is fitted to gratify at one and the same time his sinful propensities as well as his aspirations after the infinite. Nor can he be delivered from the meshes of this error except by such views of divine holiness and mercy as are calculated to beget at one and the same time a dread of sin and a trust in God. The simple creed of the Brahmo Somaj does not present such views of God, and cannot therefore detach man from his sins or save him from the fatal mistake of trying to effect a reconciliation between God and sin. It is not enough to dwell upon the unity of God, His Fatherhood, His holiness, forbearance, and love. It is not enough to exhibit the glorious attributes of God in a series of syllogisms, propositions, oracular statements, or ambiguous assertions. Right knowledge about God must be embodied in a series of tangible facts ere it can possibly be an effective warning against sin and a powerful attraction to Him. And the great beauty of Christianity is that it exhibits God, not in a series of abstract propositions, not in poetry and romance, but in a series of palpable and eloquent facts. It presents a history of God's dealings with fallen man, and in each link of this chain of narrative, extending over ages,

we see the intense holiness of God coupled with His infinite mercy. We stand aghast before the frightful punishments inflicted upon the degenerate Canaanitish races, upon the Jews themselves, and upon their oppressors, as before the awful calamities, such as cyclones, famines, and pestilences, occurring under our own eyes ! We do not pretend to be able to explain them. But in one and all of them we see God's hatred of sin and His determination to wipe it out at any cost. But hanging over the clouds and darkness surrounding these catastrophes we see the rainbow of divine mercy in bright dispensations of Providence, in glorious promises, as well as in those pathetic declarations which melt the hardest heart and bring tears out of the driest eye. In the series of revelations and providential dispensations which culminated in Christ, we see embodied that knowledge of God which is not presented by the religions of the world, and without which all attempts to call men away from sin back to piety and godliness must needs fail.

Again, Christianity sets forth the intense holiness of God and His infinite love embodied, not merely in a series of telling facts, but in a mysterious but tangible Personality. Christ is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His Person. While studying His life we stand aghast before the dreadful denunciations He hurled against the Scribes and Pharisees, and we find it hard at first sight to reconcile them to the even tenor of His life. But in these we see breaking out in another form that intense hatred of sin which in Old Testament times was seen in frightful calamities and physical plagues ; while in the milder aspects of Christ's character and career we see that love of God which endureth forever. Besides, the in-

tense holiness of God and His boundless love are both brought into the greatest prominence in the sacrificial death of Christ. Who can contemplate that death and think it possible to effect a reconciliation between sin and godliness? Who can properly consider it without being instinctively led to forsake sin and flee to the mercy-seat for complete salvation from its punishment and power?

Nor does the simple creed of Brahmoism give us adequate and reliable knowledge of what we, as sinners, ought to do to obtain mercy to pardon and grace to help us in every time of need. It is not enough to repeat the decalogue, and point it out as the common heritage of all the religions of the world. The decalogue we have trampled under our feet, its laws we have transgressed times without number and in the most presumptuous manner conceivable, and the portion we have in it is only its threatened punishment. The great question we have to settle is, How is sinful man to be reconciled to God? Human replies to this all-important question cannot satisfy us. The instinct of humanity has always led it to look up to heaven for God's own solution of this perplexing problem. A great writer in a recently published book has brought forward three classes of what may be called moral phenomena as proofs of man's determination to be guided especially in religious matters by God Himself, not by human theories and speculations. The omens, divinations, and oracles to which man has been led instinctively to resort whenever troubled by perplexing questions or faced by appalling difficulties, are proofs of his irresistible tendency to look up to heaven for teaching and guidance. This tendency, moreover, is exhibited in the revelations he has believed in, and the

varied forms of incarnation to which his homage has been paid. And therefore the all-important practical question with him is, What is God's solution of the great problem we have as sinful creatures to solve—the problem of pardon and reconciliation? Christianity embodies this solution, and it therefore is calculated to satisfy man. When the Brahmo says, Repent, and look up to the grace of God for pardon and deliverance immediately, or not through the medium of an alleged atonement, we cannot help making inquiries as to the source of this piece of information or this dictum. Where have you got this truth? If you have got it from God Himself, prove its divine origin. If not, your opinion, dignified though it is in your writings by the appellation of intuition, cannot be allowed to guide us except when it accords, as it does not in the present case, with our own. The Christian preacher says: Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and all thy house. This is not his opinion, or his intuition, or his primary belief, or one of the ultimate principles of faith. This is the WORD OF GOD, and it rests on the only kind of evidence by which a revelation from heaven can be attested. The Christian preacher takes you back through a chain of indisputable facts to the time when once and again the silence of heaven was broken, and the voice was heard like that of thunder: "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him!" And after having called your attention to what may be called Heaven's unmistakable attestation of Christ's mission, the Christian preacher asks you in the name of God to hear the Redeemer as in accents of love He extends to you and to all mankind the invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest!"



## CHAPTER VIII.

### RAJAH RAM MOHUN ROY AS A HYMNOLOGIST.

THE reform inaugurated by Rajah Ram Mohun Roy has nearly perished. The system of philosophy he revived, with a view to cut out an acceptable religion for those whom a superior education had liberated from the trammels of prevailing idolatry, has so far deviated from its original principles that it may properly be said to have ceased to exist. The pamphlets he published from time to time in support of his views can with difficulty be exhumed out of the mass of waste paper under which they have long remained buried. His very name is rarely mentioned but with comments such as lead us to the conclusion that though much credit was due to the bold spirit which led him to shake off the fetters of a religion of which as an enlightened man he could not but be ashamed, he was, as a philosopher and reformer, egregiously mistaken. Nothing is so well calculated to set forth the utter fruitlessness of those religious reforms, which have for their basis other foundation than that which is laid by God Himself, as the complete collapse which has overtaken the grand movement he set on foot.

But while every vestige of Rajah Ram Mohun Roy's philosophical achievements has been swept away, the devotional hymns he composed have defied the influences of malignant stars. These hymns exist, and are sung with zest by educated Bengalis of all varieties and



shades of opinion, from one end of the country to the other. Eminent critics are of opinion that, while the literary works of Dr. Johnson, called the monarch of literature by the wits of the brilliant club of which he was the lion, are likely to be forgotten, his happy sayings and smart repartees, as embodied in his biography by Boswell, are destined to immortalize his name. Johnson the literary giant, Johnson the poet, the moralist, the philosopher, is likely to be thrust into the limbo of forgetfulness ; but Johnson the hero of table-talk, with his sallies of wit and flashes of fancy, is sure to have an abiding place in the temple of fame. Such precisely is likely to be the case with Rajah Ram Mohun Roy. Ram Mohun Roy the philosopher has long since vanished out of sight, but Ram Mohun Roy the hymnologist lives, and will live for years if not ages to come, to touch the lyre, to raise the voice of song, and to move, if not regulate, devotional feelings.

There is a feature in these hymns fitted to cause their being readily accepted and properly appreciated by the educated classes of the population of Bengal. They are intensely *national*. They revive truths which in various forms have invariably commanded universal respect in the country, which form the basis of popular idolatry, and which are deeply imbedded, as it were, in the national mind. The Hindu is practically a polytheist, but theoretically a pantheist. Though buried in idolatry such as slides down in a descending scale from the worship of the heavenly bodies to the most grovelling types of fetichism, all his higher thoughts and aspirations assume a pantheistic form. He quietly and unobtrusively goes round a circle of rites and ceremonies, performs a number of appointed ablutions, practises rigid rules of abstinence, and occa-

sionally goes so far as to lacerate his body by penances and mortifications. But these observances can no more quiet his conscience and pacify his jarring feelings and thoughts than the absolution granted by a Popish priest can produce mental tranquillity and repose. But the conviction that he is a portion of the Godhead, an atom of His infinitely extended and all-embracing substance, separated from it by immutable and uncontrollable laws of development, yet destined finally to be merged and absorbed in it, cheers and consoles him amid the disappointments and mortifications of life. To this deep esoteric conviction the hymns of Rajah Ram Mohun Roy give tangible expression. And though originally composed by a man denounced as a heresiarch, they have become the favorite hymns of Hindu orthodoxy. They are, moreover, susceptible of a purely deistic interpretation, and may be looked upon as connecting links between the ancient civilization of the country and those forms of modern thought which are being naturalized by English education. They are therefore favorably received by those of our countrymen who, under the different denominations of Brahmos, Comtists, and spirit-rappers, construct religions *via media* between Hinduism, of which they are ashamed, and Christianity, which they regard with natural though unreasonable antipathy.

The tunes utilized by the Rajah are perhaps more in unison with prevailing taste than the subtle truths embodied in his hymns. The primitive sacred notes of Bengal, though pathetic and sweet, were becoming unfashionable when he commenced his career of religious reform. The soothing melody and voice which accompanied songs in honor of the flirtations of Krishna with the milkmaids of Brindabun were being most un-

accountably disliked by the progressive Bengalis of his day, while the pathetic metres which had for ages sweetened the effusions of orthodoxy were becoming the monopoly of porters and wagon-drivers. Ram Mohun's sagacious eye did not fail to observe this change in our national taste ; and so, instead of choosing tunes which, though sweet, were devoid of sublimity, he adopted such as were lofty and elevating. He sailed with the tide, and though his hymns would perhaps lose in effect if sung by a regular choir, such as that of a Sankritan, they soothe and elevate the soul when plied by the modulating voice of individual songsters. I need scarcely add that these tunes, though sublime, cannot be compared in elevation of voice or modulation of tone to the reverberating psalmody which animated the drooping courage of the Scottish Covenanters as they marched from their meeting-place to the battle-field, or the grand swell of the cathedral organ as it raises the accompanying voices of a practised choir amid the dead but not unquestionable silence of those whose devotional feelings it is intended to guide.

But though adorned with all that is novel and attractive in thought, music, and song, these hymns are not destined to be popular, in the widest sense of the term, in Bengal. They embody truths which are too subtle and incomprehensible to the popular mind, and they present no character around which our thoughts and feelings may cluster. The virtues and vices of chivalry could never have been immortalized had they not been embodied and richly illustrated in King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.. The daring but romantic outlawry of the middle ages could not have been perpetuated had it not been personified in Robin Hood and his bold companions. A metaphysical ab-

straction, however fitted it may be to gratify the soaring vanity of the human intellect, is not likely to be a central object of popular feeling and popular adoration. And it is such an abstraction that we find in these hymns shimmering and flashing like an electric current. They cannot therefore have anything like a permanent hold on the popular mind. They may suit the soaring aspirations of Anglicized Bengali gentlemen, and may be received with open arms in the meeting-houses of the Brahmos, but they cannot be regarded as part and parcel of the heritage of the Bengali nation. In this respect they are inferior to the popular songs of our country, which embody truths, useful, beneficent, and sublime, in characters which will never die, or die only with the entire framework of our social system.

The filial piety and devotional earnestness of Ram, the modesty and meekness of Seeta, the enthusiasm of faith as personified in Prahlad, and the sublime abnegation of self as illustrated in the sacrifice of Brishaketu—these, in spite of the absurdities with which they are mixed, are more likely to do good to the national mind and heart than the transcendental speculations of Rajah Ram Mohun Roy. And while these beautifully conceived and beautifully sustained characters have prevented the total shipwreck of our national morals consequent upon the demoralizing influences of ignorance and superstition, his hymns have hardly stood between temptation and sin in one case out of a thousand.

What a contrast between these songs and the hymnology of the Christian Church! The Christian hymns do not embody truths too subtle to be apprehended, too obscure to be clearly seen, too unsubstantial and shadowy to tell upon life and character. They

present an ever-living, ever-near Saviour, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, yet possessed of a nature similar to ours and therefore comprehensible by us ; mighty to save, full of loving-kindness and tender mercy, bearing our griefs and rejoicing in our joys, conducting us in triumph through the trials and vicissitudes of life, guiding our footsteps through the valley of the shadow of death, and ultimately receiving us with open arms into the realms of light above. Here is no shadowy abstraction to plunge us headlong into the abyss of uncertainty and doubt, no deity figuring in a series of coarse and ignoble gallantries, no hero letting loose an army of baboons and apes against monsters of hideous features and giant strength, no incarnation, half man, half brute, exhausting his fiendish rage on the professors of a heterodox creed. Here is light in darkness, balm for the wounded spirit, manna for the hungry soul, liberty to the captives, rest unutterable to the weary and heavy laden.

What, however, is the character of these hymns ? Are they bright and cheering, or gloomy and depressing ? Do they breathe the spirit of light and life and joy, or do they augment our wretchedness, intensify our sorrows, and deepen the darkness which overshadows us ? These are not trifling, unimportant questions. The tree is known by its fruits. The nature and tendencies of a particular form of religion are clearly reflected as in a mirror in its hymnology. Is it calculated to support and cheer us under the poignant trials of life ? the spirit of love and joy glistens under its hymns. Is it fitted merely to thicken the surrounding darkness and make confusion worse confounded ? the demon of uncertainty and ignorance frowns upon us from the inmost depths of the hymnology which has



grown into maturity under its shade. Let us apply this unmistakable touchstone to the Rajah's hymns. Let us see whether they are the offshoots of a religion such as irradiates our path through the pitfalls and quagmires of life, alleviates its inevitable sorrows and miseries, and crowns it with joy and gladness ; or whether they are the murky brood of a philosophy which glories in confusion and chaos, and breeds all the dark features of a morose character.

The predominant feature of these hymns is darkness. They depress instead of stirring up the lethargic soul, and soothe the feelings into a dead calm without charming them into active play. Pensiveness and sorrow, melancholy musings and painful reflections are their fruits. Look at the hymn of which the following is a literal translation :

“ Whose art thou ? Who is thine ? Whom dost thou call thy own ? In the delusive sleep of earthly affection thou dreamest ! Birds of various kinds spend the night together on the same tree, but fly in different directions as soon as the day dawns. Thus be sure are thy friends and relations, who will fly away when thou needest their assistance, there being nothing to hinder them.

“ Where are thy perfumes and chaplets ? Where thy shining jewels ? Where dost thou expect to find the very friends of thy bosom ? Where shall be thy wealth, youth, respect, and pride, when cruel death swallows thee up ? ”

Here is a picture of life, gloomy indeed, but by no means overdrawn as regards those whose hopes of happiness are confined to this world. Life a dream ! Its relationships, its energies, its activities, its toils, its pleasures, its amusements, its hopes, its anticipations, are all delusive as the mirage. This has been the language of what may be called world-inspired poetry from the beginning of days. The wisest man emerged from a course of extravagant folly to exclaim,



“Vanity of vanities ! all is vanity.” And many an individual, wise or foolish, has raised from the inmost recesses of his heart that cry of a wounded spirit.

But is there nothing to relieve the picture—nothing to hallow life into a solemn reality, a scene of useful toil and holy activity, a sphere of hopes which make not ashamed, and joys which are durable and permanent ? Look at these songs, and your answer to the question is, Nothing—alas ! nothing. Look at our Christian hymns, and the scene changes: darkness gives place to light, sorrow vanishes before joy, life becomes a sphere of toil, the results of which shall flow on in endless succession throughout eternity ; of triumphs fitted to display the unspeakable glory of God under the admiring gaze of worlds more numerous than the rustling leaves of the boundless forest.

Let us now advert to the views of the life that is to come as embodied in these hymns. But a dead silence is all that we have to encounter here. Ram Mohun Roy the philosopher may descant with the acumen of a practised logician on the doctrine of annihilation or absorption in the deity, which is but another name for annihilation. But Ram Mohun Roy the poet does not perpetrate so big an outrage against human nature. He knows that a paradise of nonentity or death only less appalling than the unutterable horrors of perdition, however attractive it may be when presented behind a formidable array of syllogisms, is quite out of place among the charms of poetry, and he does well to refrain from uplifting the veil beyond which the mind, inspired by his reasonings, refuses to look forward. But though he adroitly passes over this cardinal doctrine of his faith in his hymns, it casts its hideous shadow over them, and thickens the darkness which is

their characteristic feature. Need I compare these songs with our Christian hymns in this respect ? While Ram Mohun Roy prevaricates, shifts, and shuffles, does everything but state the truth in all its nakedness, the Christian child sings in all the simplicity of childlike joy :

“ There is a happy land,  
Far, far away !  
Where saints in glory stand,  
Bright, bright as day !”

Or the experienced Christian, softened into tears by a bright, Pisgah-like view of the glories which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered the heart of man to conceive, raises from the depths of his heart the jubilant song :

“ Jerusalem the golden, With milk and honey blest, Beneath thy contemplation, Sink heart and soul oppress.	And bright with many an angel, And many a martyr throng.
“ I know not, oh, I know not What social joys are there ; What radiancy of glory, What bliss beyond compare.	“ There is the throne of David ; And there from pain released, The shout of them that triumph, The song of them that feast.
“ They stand, those halls of Zion, Loud echoing with song ;	“ And they beneath their leader Who conquered in the fight, Forever and forever, Are clad in robes of white.”

The views, moreover, of God embodied in these hymns are by no means cheering. God is represented as the Being of beings, the Light of our eyes, and the Life of our lives, pervading all space, embracing all substance, whispering in the breeze, warbling in the streamlet, dashing in the cascade, and thundering in the sea. All this is beautiful enough to garnish the effusions of poetry and the reasonings of a species of philosophy, which, unhappily, is making some progress

in Christendom. But there is a grossness about such descriptions of the Godhead which all the poetry and philosophy of the world cannot conceal from our view. To make material substances portions of the essence of God, to confound the Creator with the creature, is the easiest way of degrading God, is to make God a monstrosity which frightens the imagination and paralyzes the feelings. The Hindu monster, with his ten heads and twenty arms, moving on like hideousness itself, manifesting itself in Herculean stature and giant proportions, is not more disgusting than the God who now rattles in a flash of lightning from one end of the heavens to the other, and then lies in the shape of a huge boulder yawning over a mountain path. Then there is connected with Ram Mohun Roy's theory a fatalism which, based on uncontrollable laws of development, tends to make God a hard taskmaster and a ruffian.

Again, because these hymns derive their inspiration from dark views of life and eternity, and views by no means cheering of God, the author of life, they are necessarily monstrous. The low notes of sorrow are the notes they raise. The human heart beats, in the well-known words of Longfellow, "Funeral marches to the grave," and they form the mournful procession moving slowly on amid all the gloomy tokens, not merely of grief, but of blank despair. Pleasant companions indeed through the dreary and howling wastes of life ! Oh for the rod of Moses to sweeten the Marah of Ram Mohun Roy's hymns ! "Where hast thou brought me ?" he says. "What hast thou done ? In the fathomless ocean of life thou hast left me to be tossed to and fro." Such is the picture of life apart from Christ ! Storms within, storms without, desires failing, hopes languishing, the agonizing tortures of

memory crowding around, a black train of days mis-spent and hours wasted behind, the horrors of hell before ! Christians ! come forward with the songs of your lips. There is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there. Look at your precious hymns. The inevitable sorrows of life, your own failings and shortcomings, do indeed give a sombre coloring to them. But beneath the thin coating of darkness attributable to the weakness of the flesh there shines the Sun of Righteousness, dispensing life and joy around.

After what has been said it may seem unnecessary to affirm that the Rajah's hymns are not indications of a healthy and regenerated soul. Within their compass we shall in vain look for the yearnings of a renewed heart—that gratitude which words are too poor to describe, that love which in its first outflowing leaves no part of the soul untouched, that eagerness to be free from the bondage of indwelling sin, those noble struggles toward spotless holiness, those hungerings and thirstings after a union the result of which is peace in this life and ineffable blessedness in that which is to come, those sorrows which end in gladness, those joys which flow on in a ceaseless, ever-expanding stream until engulfed in the illimitable ocean of heavenly felicity. Ram Mohun's songs embody the cry of nature, the moanings of distress, the shrieks of agony, the groans of despair. They are the cries of a man without hope, without God, unwilling to look into the depths of iniquity within, afraid to look forward !

The Christians' hymns have raised drooping spirits and animated desponding souls amid the sharpest trials of life. They have scared away the horrors of the battle-field, dispelled the gloom of the dungeon, and alleviated the agonies of the stake. They have

softened the pillow of sickness, and extracted the sting out of death. They cheered the martyrs of old as they hung over the flames kindled by bigotry and hate, animated Cromwell's Ironsides as they fought under the flag of religious toleration, consoled John Bunyan as, amid the hardships and privations of a prison cell, he garnered up those creations of genius which have made the world weep and laugh for nearly two centuries. Nay, they have sustained the drooping soul amid bodily and mental tortures the most excruciating that can be imagined. The slave torn from his country, his relations, and friends, compelled to toil for an iron-hearted villain, with the lash ever ready to force out the blood of his veins, and without a single ray of earthly hope, found in moments of unutterable agony rest for his troubled soul as

“ Loud he sang the Psalm of David !  
He a negro and enslaved—  
Sang of Israel's victory,  
Sang of Zion, bright and free.”

Numerous instances can be brought forward to show that these hymns are calculated to light up the faded eye of sickness and dispel the gloom of a death-bed scene. One will suffice. Among the first fruits of the Free Church Mission in Bengal there were two converts, brothers beloved, whose earthly career, though short, was so bright that each of them being dead yet speaketh. They were sweet and pleasant in their lives, and in death they were not divided. One of them, Mohendra Babu, was distinguished by vigor of intellect and solidity of attainment rarely seen among the youth of India—nay, rarely seen among the youth of any country under the sun. He commenced his apostolic career with all the enthusiasm of a Peter or a Paul, and



his rich, sonorous, and powerful voice was heard in the streets of Calcutta and in many a quiet village of Bengal, proclaiming the truth as it is in Jesus. But that noise was hushed ere its silver tones had mellowed into the gravity of age, and when lingering between life and death he assured Dr. Duff, the venerable Father of the Free Church in Bengal, that he was not at all afraid of death, his only concern arising from the distressed condition in which he was leaving his wife and daughter. His friend and brother, Kailas Babu, was of a very different temperament, meek and lowly, resembling the disciple whom Jesus loved. Early prostrated on the bed of sickness, from which he was never destined to rise, his only grief was that he was doing nothing for the Lord. "You are, dear brother, doing something for the Lord ; you are suffering for Him !" Such was the consolation ministered to him by the now sainted McDonald, whom he resembled in sweetness of disposition and simplicity of character. But the clouds thickened, and death appeared so palpably that it could not be mistaken. This was indeed a critical moment. Did he repent of his apostasy from the Hindu faith ? Our Hindu friends generally represent us converts as doing nothing but perpetually mourning over the rash step we have taken in embracing a foreign religion. We may assure them that we never for a moment do so. We do mourn over the follies we have perpetrated after conversion, over the bad examples we have set, over the little we have done to set forth the excellency of our religion ; but we never, even in our dreams, recall the fact of our being separated from Hinduism but with lively emotions of gratitude. In the stillness of the night, when deep sleep cometh upon us, we frequently revisit the homes from which we



have been thrust out, see around us the bright faces which once hung over us with all the yearnings of tender affection, and live once more the sunny days of our childhood. But we say the truth in Christ Jesus, we lie not, our consciences also bearing witness that we have not even in our dreams bowed the knee before a god or goddess of the Hindu pantheon ; we have not even in our dreams wavered in our conviction that there is none other name under heaven whereby men can be saved except the name we adore.

Excuse this digression. Kailas Babu found death staring him in the face, with a young and affectionate wife weeping by his bed. The scene was indeed gloomy. But light burst in and kindled his faded eye and brightened his stiffening features as he repeated the hymn :

“ The hour of my departure’s come,  
I hear the voice that calls me home.  
Now, O my God ! let trouble cease,  
And let Thy servant die in peace.

“ The race appointed I have run,  
The combat’s o’er, the prize is won ;  
And now my witness is on high,  
And now my record’s in the sky.

“ Not in my innocence I trust,  
I bow before Thee in the dust ;  
And through my Saviour’s blood alone  
I look for mercy at Thy throne.

“ I come, I come without a tear,  
Save for the friends I hold so dear ;  
To heal their sorrow, Lord, descend,  
And to the friendless prove a friend.”

## SUPPLEMENT.

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### CHAPTER IX.

#### THE ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG INDIA.\*

It sometimes does us good to begin at the root and work upward ; and so let me raise the question, What is an aspiration ? An aspiration may be legitimately defined as a desire upward. Men in this world are animated and influenced by various classes of desires. These, however, may all be classed under two heads—desires upward and desires downward, desires which lead to our improvement and those which lead to our degradation. The latter class of our desires, viz., the class embracing those which lead to our degradation, cannot with any degree of propriety be called aspirations, and therefore with them I have nothing to do this evening.

Nor is it my intention to treat of all classes of your aspirations. You have, for instance, your political aspirations, and you most naturally and most properly wish to see the middle wall of partition between yourselves and the members of the ruling class broken

\* The above is given in the form of a lecture rather than an essay, to show the sort of discourses given in India for the benefit of its educated, English-speaking native inhabitants, by those who are aware that a learned and a systematically thought-out discourse is sure to be wasted on them.—R. G. B.

down, and yourselves raised to the position of influence and affluence occupied by them. In this wish of yours, as a native of India and one of yourselves, I most cordially sympathize ; and to all legitimate efforts put forward toward the attainment of this lofty status I heartily bid God-speed. But with your political aspirations I have nothing to do this evening. Then you have your educational aspirations. You wish most naturally and most properly to see carried out in your country a system of education fitted to raise you intellectually not a little above yourselves, but up to the very level of those who at present are tempted to look down upon you. In this wish of yours, a countryman of yours, and one of yourselves, I most cordially sympathize, and to all legitimate efforts put forward in this line of our national improvement I cannot but bid God-speed ! But with your educational aspirations I have nothing to do this evening. Nor have I this evening anything to do with those of your aspirations which have for their object your rise in civilization and glory, though there is no one in this meeting more ready to sympathize with you in them.

I have to take notice of and express my deep sympathy in your religious aspirations. These are embodied in the principles, the creed, the constitution, and the operations of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj, a Somaj resting, in our humble opinion, on a basis more rational by far than that of the New Dispensationists. The watchwords of this Somaj embody the moral and religious aspirations of young India. These are : (1) Independence of Thought, (2) Catholicity of Spirit, (3) Immediacy, and (4) Spirituality. Of these battle-cries of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj we shall take notice as embodying not merely the principles it is

fighting for, but the religious aspirations of our educated countrymen in general.

1. The first of these cries is Independence of Thought. You most naturally wish and pray for this blessing. The country has but too long groaned under superstition and error, kingcraft and priestcraft, temporal and spiritual tyranny of the most galling type. The country has for ages and ages untold been bowing to human authority. You have to a great extent been liberated from its trammels, and you most naturally wish for independence of thought. And let me assure you that we, Christian preachers, deeply sympathize in this wish of yours. Far from opposing it, we look upon it as a praiseworthy aspiration and a harbinger of real progress under proper guidance.

Do you, however, pause and inquire in what does true independence of thought consist? Pray remember that genuine independence of thought does *not* consist in its being absolutely free. Absolute freedom of thought is unattainable, and would be a curse to us were it attainable. Your thought cannot possibly be free from all control. It must either be under right control or wrong control, under proper guidance or improper guidance. Emancipated from all control or guidance, perfectly uncontrolled and unguided it cannot possibly be in its present condition, perhaps under all conceivable circumstances.

Let me illustrate this by an example. The legitimate sovereign of the human heart is God. When God is allowed to rule in it, all its affections and passions, inclinations and tendencies, desires and aspirations are properly developed and properly directed, and there is harmony within. But if God is thrust out of the throne of the heart, it is by no means left uncon-

trolled and unguided. Sin takes His place, and, under the control of the monster, all its powers and susceptibilities are improperly developed and misdirected. The result is disharmony and disquietude. The heart cannot possibly be left freed from all control, good or bad, emancipated from all guidance, right or wrong. Or, in other words, the heart cannot be *neutral*, moved neither by good nor by bad feelings, hanging between loyalty and disloyalty to God, its legitimate Sovereign.

In the same way the mind cannot be left entirely uncontrolled, emancipated from all guidance, right or wrong. The legitimate sovereign of the mind is truth, and its independence consists in its being placed under the guidance of truth, not in its being left uncontrolled and unguided, even if such a mental state were possible. When the mind is under the guidance of truth, its legitimate sovereign, all its faculties and powers are properly developed and properly directed, and there is harmony within it. But when truth is thrust out of the throne of the mind it is not left uncontrolled, for error takes its place and begins the domination, the result of which is disharmony and disorder. Under the guidance of error all the noble faculties of the mind are improperly developed and sadly misdirected. Thought is ennobled and exalted under the control of truth, degraded and debased under the dominance of error. Independence of thought therefore consists in its being emancipated from wrong control and placed under right control, liberated from error and placed under the guidance of truth.

But what is truth, or the truth ? Christ calls Himself the truth, the truth embodied, personified, concentrated and exemplified. He emphatically claims Divinity when He says, "I am the Truth !" You may be dis-

posed to question such a claim ; but you will not object to my calling God the truth in the sense in which Christ represented Himself as the truth. God then is the legitimate sovereign of the human mind as well as the human heart, and independence of thought consists in its being freed from the control of error and placed under the control of God Himself. In God then does your thought find its highest liberty !

Please remember that your thought finds its highest expansion in God. We see in this world an endless chain of truths fitted to enlarge and ennoble our minds, rising from the lowest of created objects up to the very throne of the Creator. Each link of truth in this all-comprehensive chain is sure, when rightly apprehended, to expand our minds ; and the higher we ascend in our apprehension of the successive links of this chain, the greater the expansion. And certainly, when we leave the chain of created objects behind us, and meditate on the varied attributes of the Creator—on His infinite justice and unbounded love, as well as on His matchless power and unerring wisdom—we feebly attempt to grasp what is fitted to lead the mind to the highest stages of development. In God then the mind finds not only its noblest freedom, but its highest expansion.

Please remember also that your thought finds its last resting-place in God. You cannot possibly confine yourself to the work of registering the phenomena of which you cannot but be cognizant. The impulse that leads you to such registration leads you a step farther—leads you to throw aside the veil of phenomena and observe the occult forces at work behind them. It is possible to proscribe metaphysical inquiry, but it is impossible to keep the human mind from rushing toward such investigation. Again, the same necessity of the



intellect that leads you to the region of metaphysical forces leads you a step farther—leads you to recognize the unseen spirit that guides these hidden and indefinable powers of nature. But when you have reached this terminus your mind rests. You never think of going or pushing your research beyond the Almighty. In God does your vagrant thought find its abiding rest. Again, your path in this world is beset with enigmas and mysteries, with problems you cannot solve, and riddles you cannot unriddle. For instance, you cannot possibly reconcile absolute foreknowledge on the part of God to your own responsibility ; the sovereignty of the Creator to the free agency of a rational creature like yourself. But in all such matters, where you cannot explain you can trust. Your thought in its soaring flight gets wearied and finds an abiding resting place in God.

Now we, Christian preachers, do not ask you to bow to human authority—the authority of missionaries and chaplains, of bishops and archbishops, of popes and councils. We simply exhort you to bow to the authority of God, your Creator and Preserver, your Sovereign and Judge, not to say your Father in heaven. The Brahmo comes to you with a string of his opinions, which he may dignify by means of specious names, such as intuitions, primary convictions, ultimate principles of faith, etc. But they are, barring a few fundamental truths which are by no means enough to land us where peace with God and holiness of character are attainable, his opinions, and as such they are to be adopted only when they accord with our convictions. But we come to you armed with the Word of God, which rests on evidence which you cannot dispassionately examine without being convinced of its conclu-

siveness. And we call upon you to build your faith on this rock, which the gates of hell cannot shake. Do we not encourage your longing for freedom of thought ?

2. The second watchword of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj is Catholicity of Spirit. Your wish for this excellency is most natural. The religion of this country is perhaps the most exclusive system ever elaborated by man, and its life is perpetual, ceaseless depletion. Vigor is daily and hourly flowing out of its huge body, and fresh accession of strength is impossible to it. Its exclusiveness is therefore the most fruitful source of its dissolution, and the time is not far distant when the entire framework will come down with a tremendous crash. You have to a great extent emancipated yourself from its spirit of exclusiveness, and you most naturally wish for catholicity of spirit as well as independence of thought. And let me assure you that we most cordially sympathize with you in this aspiration of your hearts.

Of course it is the fashion to represent us as exceedingly narrow-minded and exclusive. But it is not at all difficult for us to prove that we are far more liberal-minded and far less exclusive than the friends who are never tired of accusing us of bigotry and exclusiveness. Do these persons maintain that there are elements of truth to be found in one and all the religions of the world ? So do we ! Do they maintain that these precious elements of truth ought not to be despised because they are buried under heaps of error ? So do we ! In what sense then are we more exclusive than they ?

We maintain, without the slightest equivocation, that precious elements of truth are to be found in all the religions of the world, present or past. Nay, we go a step farther and affirm that they could not possi-

bly have spread if they had not such elements of truth imbedded in them. A system of unmixed error has no chance of success even in this sin-laden world. If there were a religion invented without the slightest tinge of truth in it, men, sinful though they confessedly are, would recoil from it in horror, and it would be still-born. The very fact that the religions of the world have each secured the homage of masses of human beings is a proof that they are not systems of unmitigated error.

Thus far, then, we are most willing to go with our accusers. But we most emphatically deny that it is possible for a sinful man to separate these elements of truth from the heaps of error under which they lie buried, and construct them into a system of unmixed truth. Man in his present condition has his judgment warped and his heart vitiated by sin, and he cannot discriminate between truth and error with infallible precision or unquestionable certitude. He cannot in all cases separate truth from error and build up a system of unalloyed truth. And when a sinful man like Babu Keshub Chunder Sen affirms that he is to take the cream out of every system of religious faith and elaborate a creed of absolute truth freed from the slightest touch of error, we cannot but regard his pretensions with suspicion and distrust.

The body of truths found in the religions of the world is presented much more clearly and much more authoritatively in our sacred Scriptures. We adopt this inferior body of truths, and are therefore not obnoxious to the charge of narrow-mindedness and exclusiveness so recklessly preferred against us. But we do something more. We adopt that higher body of truths to which they obstinately refuse to listen, though these

are attested by evidence of the most conclusive character.

A great German theologian represents heathenism as *the seeking religion*, and Judaism as *the hoping religion*. You will perhaps need a little explanation to enable you to grasp the ideas imbedded in these expressions. There are certain questions, appertaining specially to the welfare of our undying souls, which we cannot help raising or taking into our most serious consideration. Is there a God ? Does He take a deep interest in our affairs ? Is He willing to receive us back to His family on earth, to the Fold of which He is the Shepherd ? Is He willing to pardon our sins and deliver us from their dominating influence ? Is He willing to guide us through the vexations and trials of life ? These questions force themselves on our attention, and we can no more get rid of them entirely than we can get rid of our being. It is possible for us to bury them under our secular aspirations and under specious theories ; but as they are suggested by the very conditions of our being, they cannot possibly be got rid of entirely.

Heathenism raises these all-important questions ; but Heathenism does not solve them. Doubts and fears are heaped up in its path, and certainty in religious matters is a thing almost if not wholly unknown. The existence of a God of some indefinable kind is certainly admitted, but His feelings toward us are dubiously, or rather wrongly, interpreted ; and we are left in uncertainty as to His willingness to extend to us all the help of which, in our present deplorable condition, we so obviously stand in need.

Judaism advances a step farther. It raises the self-same questions, and it does not solve them thoroughly. But with prophetic certainty it points to a time when they

will in the course of providence be satisfactorily solved. Judaism has what Heathenism lacks—a prophetic significance as well as a present efficacy—and its sublime uniqueness, not to speak of its higher excellences, is itself a proof of its divine origin.

Christianity solves these mighty problems, and solves them in a glorious Personality rather than in a revealed body of solutions. Christianity is summed up in Christ, and in Christ these problems, which have perplexed for ages untold the loftiest minds the world has seen, are solved, and that most satisfactorily. Is there a God? Christ is God Incarnate, the brightness of God's glory, the express image of His person. Does He take a deep interest in our affairs? Christ is the highest expression of the unspeakably profound interest He takes in our affairs. Does He love us? God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Is He willing to accept and bless us? Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Is He willing to guide us through the vexations and trials of life? I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. I will never leave thee—I will never forsake thee. These all-important problems are solved, as they have never been, in Christ Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us.

We Christians go all lengths with our detractors in adopting the inferior body of truth found in all the religions of the world. But we advance a step farther—we adopt the higher body of truth embodied in Jesus Christ. Are we not more catholic than they are? Have we not better reason to bring a charge of narrow-mindedness and exclusiveness against them than they have to bring such charge against us?



At all events, let me assure you that we deeply sympathize with you in your longing for breadth of view and catholicity of spirit. But beware, my friends, that this noble longing may not degenerate into mere sentimentalism—a morbid sentimentalism that refuses to discriminate between truth and error, and glories in constructing a system of heterogeneous elements, presenting an odd mixture of sound doctrine and false theory, of chaste principle and wild speculation, of grovelling fetichism and sublime monotheism !

3. The third watchword of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj is *Immediacy*. This involves the denial, peremptory and unequivocal, of the doctrine of mediation. To nothing are our educated countrymen more thoroughly opposed than to this universally received doctrine ; and their opposition cannot but appear at first sight natural. The array of mediators presented in the national pantheon are as a rule types of vice and criminality ; and one cannot contemplate the disgusting forms of degradation they conjure up without a perfect revulsion of feeling. A reaction, therefore, against the doctrine so ludicrously travestied is on their part natural ; nor can we indulge in unmitigated condemnation when we see them carried by it from one extreme to the other, from a gross abuse and parody of the doctrine of mediation to a complete denial of it.

What is the gist of their objections to this doctrine ? They are often heard speaking in this strain : Why should we go to an inferior being when we can approach God direct ? Why should we go to his Excellency's private secretary when we can go to the Viceroy direct ? We need not pause to affirm that in such declarations our friends assume the very point to be proved, viz., that they can approach God direct. Nor do we



stop to affirm that if they had only approximately adequate views of their own sinfulness, they would not speak in this reckless style. But we do affirm that their objections to the doctrine of mediation lose all their force as soon as they are applied to the Lord Jesus Christ? Christ is a *divine* Mediator, and approaching Him is approaching God direct! If Christ were a human being, like Socrates or Vyas or Nanak or Chaitanya or Babu Keshub Chunder Sen, these objections might legitimately be applied to Him, and approach to God through Him deprecated. But Christ being God-Incarnate, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of lords and the God of gods, these objections lose their force as soon as they are applied to Him.

Approaching Christ is in reality approaching God. Christ has brought God down to the level of our comprehension; has presented God in the only form in which we can possibly know, love, and serve Him. An ordinary illustration will make this clear. Suppose the sun is eclipsed, and a person wishes to see what portion of the glorious disk is darkened. What does he do? He knows he cannot lift up his eye toward the sun and gaze upon it without being dazzled into blindness. He therefore stains a piece of glass, and through it gazes upon the luminary, and observes the portion of it eclipsed. The stained glass is a softening medium, and through it the effulgence of the sun reaches the eye softened, and does not therefore dazzle it into blindness. In the same manner the glory of God comes to us softened through Christ, and does not therefore dazzle and overpower us. Christ is, properly speaking, God to us, and therefore approaching Him is approaching God direct. And consequently your wish

for immediacy is also encouraged, properly speaking, by our holy religion.

4. And lastly, you ardently long for Spirituality, which is the fourth and last battle-cry of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. No wonder ! The religion of the country has for ages been a system of pure externalism, a religion of dead forms and lifeless observances. Under its influence the smallest things are tithed, and the weightier matters of law and judgment are laid aside. Formality is idolized, morality is cast overboard, and the unspeakable blessings of heart-religion are extinguished by a round of ceremonial observances, the significance of which is not perceived, and the efficacy of which is therefore simply *nil*. From this mass of externalism you naturally recoil, and you ardently wish for a system of religion more spiritual by far. And in this wish of yours we, Christian preachers, cannot but deeply sympathize. But you are in danger of being carried to the other extreme, even by a natural reaction against dead formalism. You are in danger of wishing for a religion thoroughly and exclusively spiritual, a religion free from all forms. We are of course willing to admit that Christianity is not such a religion. It is spiritual indeed, but it is not exclusively spiritual—it is not free from all forms. It would not be suited to our present circumstances if it were so. We are dualistic, composed of bodies and souls ; and the religion we need must be dualistic, or have a body and a soul. A religion free from the slightest touch of formality might be adapted to benefit angelic intelligences, but it would be out of place in this world.

A great writer says that every spiritual idea in the world tends to corporeity, or to appear in a bodily form. An illustration or two will make this clear.

Here is a painter who has a nice picture in his head. He is naturally impelled to transfer that picture from his head to the canvas. The picture cannot receive all the finish of which it is capable without such transference, nor can it exert a reflex influence of a salutary nature over the painter himself, and a direct influence of such character over the world at large, so long as it remains concealed in the dark chambers of his mind. No wonder then that he is anxious to give it a tangible and visible shape, and not to allow it to perish in its embryonic state among the abortive creations of his mind. Again, take the case of an architect who has a grand idea in his mind. He most naturally wishes to see that idea embodied in brick and mortar. Why? Because he believes that the idea cannot receive all the finish of which it is susceptible, and do good to himself and the world at large, till it is thus embodied. Once more, let us take the case of a man penetrated with missionary enthusiasm, a desire to spread truth and root out error. He is naturally led to communicate that desire, through the medium of what may be called personal magnetism, to a number of select friends. The desire is then embodied in a committee, and when thus embodied it does good to him, his associates, and the world at large. Had the spiritual idea in each of these cases not tended to corporeity, what would have been the consequence? It would not have approximated perfection, would not have done good to the originator, and would not have benefited mankind at large. We are therefore so constituted that our spiritual ideas tend to corporeity or appear in visible shapes.

If we have the religious feelings stirred up within us by a vivid presentation of facts fitted to stimulate them, they will tend to appear in tangible and visible

forms. If we have, for instance, genuine penitence stirred up by a view somewhat adequate of our sinfulness coupled with that of God's unspeakable love, it will manifest itself in confessions and tears. If we have our gratitude to God stimulated by a consideration of our own unworthiness, and the innumerable blessings, both temporal and spiritual, with which we have been favored during our past lives, it will manifest itself in the language of praise and thanksgiving. And lastly, when the love of God, begotten by an overpowering exhibition of His infinite though unmerited love toward us, reigns in the soul, it will manifest itself in appropriate acts of worship as well as in a life of loyalty and obedience. And therefore forms of religion are in our present condition unavoidable, when we have the substance of it. Those who denounce forms in the most sweeping manner have no religion in their hearts.

Nor is it necessary or proper for us to denounce all forms. There are forms which are dead, and there are forms which are living. There are forms with substance, and forms without substance. It is certainly necessary to denounce dead forms and meaningless mummeries, because they degrade the mind and enslave the spirit. But living forms—forms which indicate the life of religion in the soul—have no such consequences, and ought not therefore to be run down. The human body is honored so long as it is animated by the soul ; but when the vital spirit goes out it becomes a dead corpse, and is in consequence thrown aside. In the same manner forms of religion animated by the soul of religion are sources of improvement and should not be set aside. But when they are dead or become meaningless mimics and tomfooleries, the best thing you can do with them is to get rid of them.

In Christianity, then, all the religious aspirations of Young India have their legitimate gratification or fulfilment. They are not realized in Brahmoism, which really, if not ostensibly, demands homage to human authority, lacks catholicity enough to adopt and assimilate to itself the higher body of truth revealed in the Word of God, refuses to look upon approach to Christ as approach direct to God, and either abandons itself to a series of mummeries and tomfooleries, as in the case of the New Dispensationists, or shows a tendency to denounce all forms, living or dead, as in the case of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj. We are justified, then, in affirming that the religious aspirations of Young India are realized in Christianity, and Christianity alone !

Let us conclude with the remark that these aspirations are by no means the highest aspirations of your undying souls. You have longings deeper and yearnings higher than these, and these are also satisfied in our holy religion. You long for light—such knowledge of God as elicits your faith, trust, and confidence—and your longing for light is nowhere satisfied so thoroughly as in Christianity or Christ, who is the Light of the World. You are troubled by a deep sense of your guilt, and you naturally long for pardon ; and Christianity comes to you with an assurance of God's pardoning mercy. You are moreover troubled by indwelling sin, of which unaided you can never get rid, and Christianity comes to you with the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. You long for guidance, and some reliable intimations about the world toward which you are going, and these are secured to you by our holy religion. All the noblest yearnings of your souls are satisfied in Christianity !



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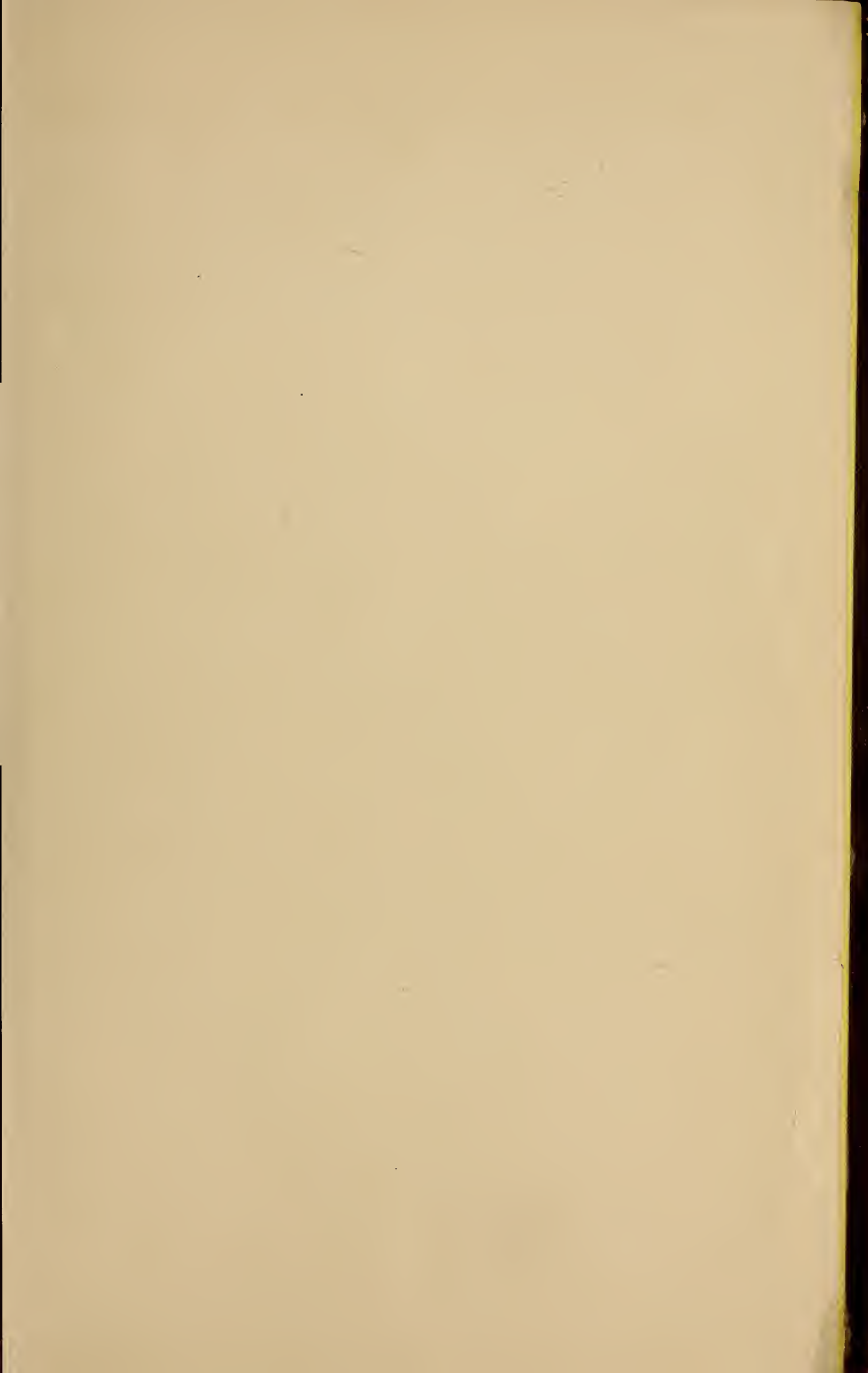
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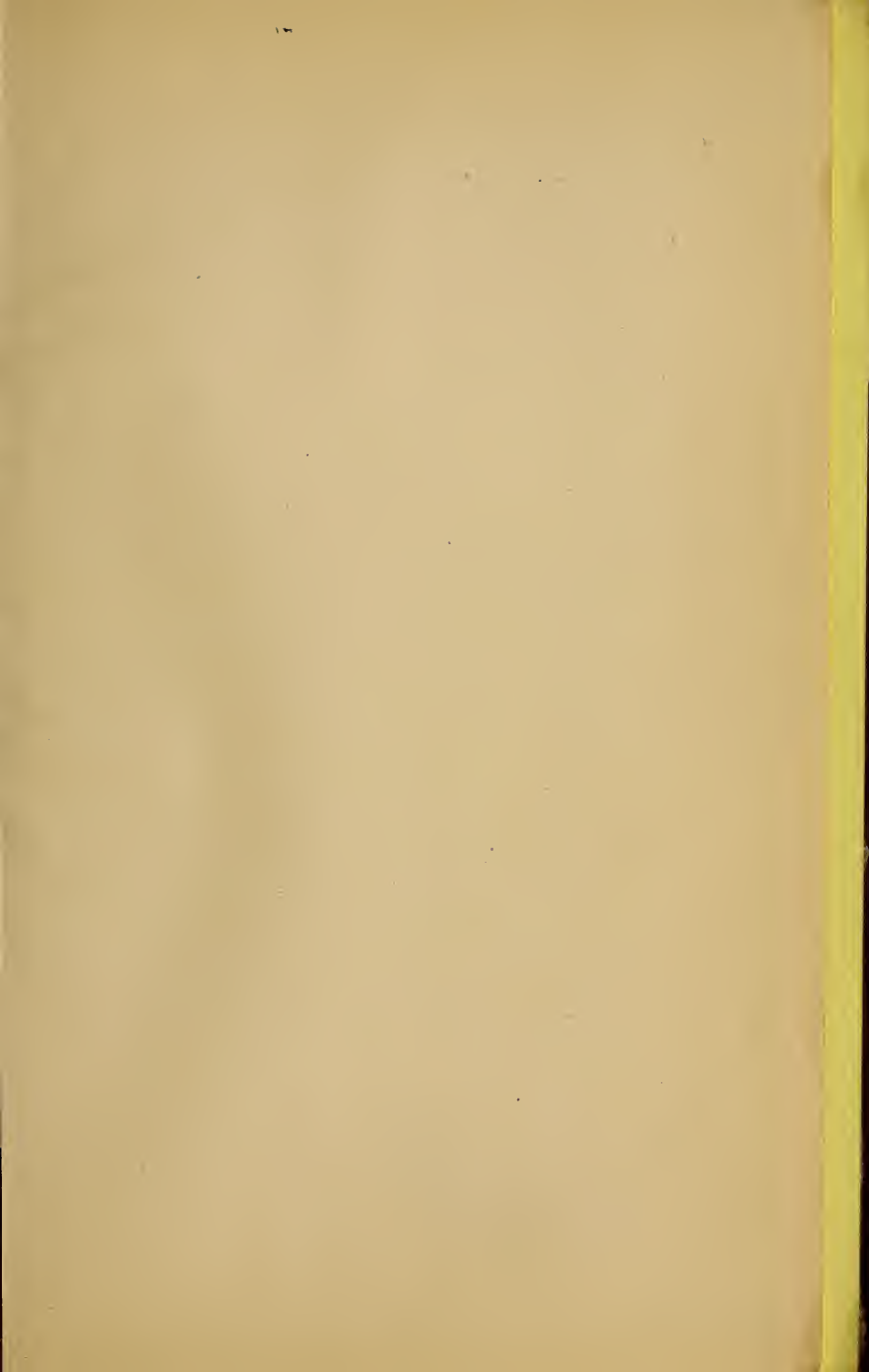
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